



ARTICLES AND REVIEWS FROM
www.the-improvisor.com
2004-2016

ISBN 87-91425-09-3
Pdf edition April 2016, Intuitive Music Homepage
compiled by Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen

PREFACE

What is The Improvisor?

The Improvisor as a web presence started in 2004. Earlier, it was founded 1980 by LaDonna Smith and Davey Williams and began as a printed newsletter, becoming a journal featuring articles and reviews. 11 paper journals were issued until the last one in 1996.

What is this book?

This is a compilation of the online content from www.the-improvisor.com so far in the form of an ebook in pdf format, from 2004 til beginning of 2016. It was undertaken for the sake of secure long-term documentation and possible convenience of some of those interested. Please see www.the-improvisor.com or contact LaDonna Smith, Alabama for more information and recent additions.

Other than articles and reviews, the web presence comprises links, biographical info on founders LaDonna Smith and Davey Williams and a catalogue of recordings as well as printed journals for sale.

In some cases dead links could be circumvented by searching from the net outside, so this compilation contains slightly more than the website at the time of compiling.

I have sought to preserve the original colourful style of the web pages.

What is it not?

Contents appear here with no added hyperlinks or other indexing or rearranging conveniences. They have been pasted and minimally layouted manually with care, but this is not a revised edition - even though you may enjoy some benefits to have it all at in one file. Nothing in the texts have been willfully changed, apart from minor typographical issues arising from the conversion. Illustrations have been reproduced with a view to file size economy, but losses are believed to be minimal compared to the originals.

Years given for articles are those of the last revision of the web page in question, unless there was a good clue pointing elsewhere. They do not necessarily match the year the contents were written. For the reviews, years have not been collected, but very often you can find out when the releases took place by searching the net.

How to use it

After this preface, indexes of first the articles and then of the reviews

follow. Then comes the large bulk of articles in the order they appeared in the index and, as the last part, the reviews.

To get an overview you have to look through the articles or reviews index. You can also use your standard search function (like Ctr-F) to see whether your favourite names are included and where and how. And, of course, to find a specific article or review or descriptive word. At the site there were a number of reviews having links from several musicians' names. These are not rendered as dublets in this edition, because I presuppose that the reader makes extensive use of searching for finding the relevant ones, rather than leafing through.

- - -

A greeting from the compiler

Improvisors are thoughtful people - enjoy reading! This is a significant collection of documents around improvised music in USA and elsewhere, portraying more than a decade of its mature development. Who knows, in decades to come readers of these texts might wonder at looking back at these old days. I am sure, however, that they will be impressed by the passion and creativity invested.

Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen, Humlebaek (Denmark) 2016.

ARTICLES INDEX

This list is chronological, the most recent first.
Please see the preface about how to find the articles.

<u>Book Reviews</u>	Davey Williams
<u>the improviser festival 2010</u> <i><u>Thirty Year Anniversary of the improvisor ,</u></i> <i><u>a review and overview of improvisation</u></i>	Juanita Suarez
<u>Old Timey Avant-Garde in the New South</u>	Heather Palmer
<u>In Honor of Bill Dixon</u>	Eric Zinman
<u>Brief Report & Singing Neanderthals</u>	Doug Carroll
the improvisor festival <u>Post Mordem</u>	participants
<u>Rocks in the Sea</u>	Eric Zinman
<u>Fifth International Conference on Art & Society 2010</u>	University of Sydney Australia
<u>Fourth ISIM Conference/ UCSD Festival</u> <u>review 2009</u>	Killick Hinds
<u>Third ISIM Conference Report 2008</u>	LaDonna Smith
<u>Thirld ISIM Conference Review 2008</u>	by Roman Stolyar
<u>DEVO</u> new album, tour, documentary	Patrick Flanery
<i><u>What to do at the Fork in the Road or</u></i> <i><u>Improvisation as Cultural Navigational</u></i> <i><u>Technique</u></i>	LaDonna Smith
<u>Morgan Craft -</u> <u>The Silver Bullet NEW RELEASE</u>	Morgan Craft Q & A.
<u>Improvisation as a Tool for</u> <u>Investigating Reality</u>	Stephen Nachmanovitch

<u>Improvisation as a Form of Cultural Recreation</u>	LaDonna Smith
<u>"Words of a Master Improviser" Part One</u>	by Dave Fox
<u>What Might The New Language Be?</u>	Mario Rechtern
<u>THE TROUBLE WITH MUSIC</u> by Mat Callahan NEW BOOK REVIEW	LaDonna Smith
<u>Improvisation as Prayer</u>	LaDonna Smith
<u>For a Wild Music</u>	by Johannes Bergmark, <small>Stockholm</small>
<u>Improvised Music in Denmark</u>	Kresten Osgood
<u>Alabama Improv Co-op</u>	Kenny Johnson, Jeff McLeod
<u>Improvisation in Education</u>	LaDonna Smith
<u>The Moment As Teacher</u>	LaDonna Smith
<u>The Thomas Gaudysnki Report</u>	Thomas Gaudysnki
Improvisation ~ an improvisation	Robert Dick
<u>The Black Equation Form 2</u>	Morgan Craft
Hip Hop Subway Series SPECIAL REPORT	Beatboxer Entertainment
(area code) Noise NOISE	folks, here's how it's done.
Red Headed Stepchild	Claire Barratt / Cilla Vee Arts
First Conference of I.S.I.M , a review	LaDonna Smith
Improvisational Texts TEXTS	Jim Hearon
Hesterian Spirituals BOOK PREVIEW	Karlton Hester

Prelude to an Article in the Key of Green	Iner Souster
Honest Person's Guide to the Orchestra	Annonymous
Points of Jazz - Dave Liebman & the 16th international Association of Schools of Jazz (IASJ) 2006 meeting	LaDonna Smith
Gamelan Amadindas Very Special Arts	by Gregory Acker
ISIM THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE , 2008 a RePORT International Society for Improvised Music	LaDonna Smith
An Improvisational Life	Michael Keith
Some ARTISTIC PREOCCUPATIONS	Thomas Gaudynski
SubTROPICS 19 THE FESTIVAL	Subtropics, Miami Festival of New Music
Dave Holland Review	Ned Mudd
In Memory of Hugh Davies 1943-2005	David Toop
HIGH ZERO FESTIVAL 2005	LaDonna Smith
Flash / Forward <i>Improvfest</i>	DC Improv Festival Dec. 3-12, 2004
MUSICIANS SOLIDARITY NETWORK from the Squids' Ear	Mark Ribot
An Improvisational Life	Michael Keith
Airplay 101	Brian Farrish
Minim 2004 Festival Review	Chris Williams
CLassical Musician Wanted	Carson Arnold
New Contact in Poland	Darius Cezary Startek
Manifesto Against Music	Johannes Bergmark

AETHERFEST	international radio festival
Musical Quotes	Gregory Acker
Sound Changes	by David Rothenberg
Improvisation as a Form of Cultural Recreation	by LaDonna Smith
Call For The Hidden Sounds	Johannes Bergmark
Improvisation, Listening on stringboards...	Dave Knott
Some Thoughts on Improvisation	Greg Segal
Artist Letter to Reviewer	Susan Hefner
"Becoming-Still: Perspectives in Musical Ontology after Deleuze and Guattari"	Michael Szekely
Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836-1970 - a Book Review-	Davey Williams
HOTHOUSE, a Chicago Tradition	LaDonna Smith
Women Make Half the Sound Festival, Chicago	LaDonna Smith
Commentary & Review Live Improvisation with film	Wyman Brantley
Musings on Deep Listening	Marilyn Lerch
LMC Annual Festival of Experimental Music	report by Viv Couringham
Art of Acousmatic Composition in interview with Eric Leonardson	Jacopo Andreini
The Fraternal Disorder of Noise	Ben Portis

<u>The Art of Binaural Location Performance</u>	Dallas Simpson
<u>Pluralism in Progress</u>	Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen
<u>Go North Son</u>	by Misha Feigin
<u>Improvising Across Borders</u>	LaDonna Smith
<u>Building Stronger Improvising Communities</u>	Dana Reason
<u>Reflections on UCSD Conference "improvising across borders"</u>	by Beth Glick-Rieman
<u>Is there Life After Work?</u>	Michael Jackson
<u>Vancouver Time Flies</u>	Laurence Svirchev
<u>Mp3, Evolution, Revolution or Devolution</u>	Rotcod Zzaj
<u>Mp3 technarticle</u>	Rotcod Zzaj
<u>Thoughts and Comments</u>	by Kid Lucky
<u>Guelph International Jazz Festival & Colloquium</u>	LaDonna Smith

REVIEWS INDEX

This is an alphabetical list.
Please see the preface about how to find the reviews.
Reviews in green have expired.

a cONVENIENCE, tENTATIVELY **expired, sorry.**

Actis Band [Son Para El Che](#)

Adolfsson, Jorgen [Luft:Iskra](#)

Acker, Gregory [Recent Fossils](#)

[Time of the Grets](#)

[Young and Innocent Days](#)

Adams, John Luther [Light That Fills the World](#)

[The Place We Began](#)

Aebi, Irene **Associates**

Allen, Susan [Duets](#)

Aguilar, Gustavo [Dreaming with Serpents](#)

Albee, Liz [Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise](#)

Alcorn, Susan [Concentration](#)

[Limn](#) with Tatsuya Nakatani & Audrey
Chen

Anderson, Fred [Fred Anderson Quartet](#) with Bill Brimfield, Tatsu Aoki, Chad Taylor,

Aono Jikken [A Page of Madness](#)

Arnold, Rachel [Descansos, Past](#)

Aoki, Tatsu [Dial](#)

Archer, Martin [Eighty Eight Enemies](#)

[Disconnected Bliss](#)

[Transient V Resident](#)

[Pure Water Construction](#)

[Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)

[Heritage and Ringtones](#)

Archer, James [Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)

Arnold, Bruce [Disklaimer](#)

Asahara, Masayo [Heritage and Ringtones](#)

Ashik [Dancing Lightly](#)

Atkins, Mark [The Tubes](#)

Avgerin, Charles [Blue Rhizome](#)

Reviews in green have expired.



*We remember his dry wit,
his music, his presence , his wit, the father figure
of the European Improvised Music Movement .*

Derek Bailey

[Meanwhile, Back in Sheffield...](#)
[In Play](#)

Laurie Scott Baker [Liquid Metal Dreaming](#)

Berkeley Gamelan Ensemble [Lion's Eye/Lion's Tale](#)

Billy Bang [Echoes](#)

Ron Bangi [M'Lumba vs. Kobalt 6](#)
[Spinning Toursts in a City of Ghosts](#)

Lewis Barnes [Great Sunset](#)

Barabino, Federico [Continuo](#) with Gino Robair

Sally Barr [Jim Conolly and the Gove Country String Quartet](#)

Robert Barrows [How the Light Gets In](#)

Barsness, Eric [My Dear Siegfried](#)

Baumann, Franziska [Voice Sphere](#)

Carlos Bechegas [Airs](#)
[Departure of One](#)

Mick Beck [Meanwhile, Back in Sheffield](#)
[Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)

Berndt, John [Private Language Problem](#)

Behrman, David [My Dear Siegfried](#)

Beins, Burkhard [Perlon](#)

Berardi, Joseph [Impropera Non Credo](#)

Bennett, Samm [Secrets of Teaching Yourself Music](#)

Borah Bergman [Blind Pursuits](#)

James Bergman [Trios for Deep Voices](#)

Bergmark, Johannes [Musica Genera](#)

Berndt, John [Thus, Tripod Mind](#)

Michael Bettine [Stars Show the Way](#)

Carl Bergstrom-Nielsen

Martin Birke [Urubamba](#)

Robert Black [Vermont, The Seasons](#)

William Blauvelt [A Page of Madness](#)

Peter Blegvad [Hangman's Hill](#)

Jonathan Blepler [The Opium War](#)

Jaap Blonk

Bode, Peer [Voice Coil](#)

Eric Boeren Quartet [Joy of a Toy](#)

Guido Bombardieri

Bourdellon, Jerome [Totem](#)

Loren Boyer [Des Parasites](#)

Steve Brand [Tree Sap for the Heart.](#)

Anthony Braxton

[Willem Breuker](#)

Dario Bruna [Mysterioso-Automatismi](#)

Buckner, Thomas [My Dear Siegfried](#)

[Totem](#) with Jerome Bourdellon

Burt, Warren [The Animation of Lists And the Archytan Transpositions](#)

John Butcher And Only Life My Lush Lament

Buddy Systems with Gino Robair

Minton, Butcher, Hirt: Two Concerts

Navigations Taylor ho Bynum

Buzzarte, Moniek Dreaming Wide Awake

Chris Bywater **Transient V Resident**

Reviews in green have expired.

Pete Cafarella

Construction, Destruction, Recreation

Robert Calvert

So Be It

Allison Cameron

live performance at Victory, Toronto, Sept 5, 2000 Rosella Cangini

Divertissement

Mysterioso-Automatismi

Bridget Carey String Quartets-Peter Garland

Doug Carroll Recent Fossils

Peering Over

Daniel Carter Resonance

Kent Carter Fairly Early with Postscripts

George Cartwright Fabulous Drop

Jessica Catron, Descansos Past

Bruce Cawdron Accidents with Nature

Joseph Celli The Seasons : Vermont

CHW TRIO Serendipity Eugene Chadbourne Young and Innocent Days

Ed Chang Spin-17

Chenevier, Guigou Speechless

Francois Chevrolet Doubles

Double Jeu Trio

Audrey Chen [Limn](#) with Tatsuya Nakatani & Susan Alcorn

Jonathan Chen [Quartet Solo Pieces](#)

Peggy Chew [Sonic Calligraphy](#)

Alex Cline [Right of Violet](#)

Clit Stop [Clit Stop , Many Bands](#)

Chris Cochran [Fabulous Drop](#)

Rafael Cohen [Construction, Destruction, Recreation](#)

Randall Colbourne [Resonance](#)

Cold Blue [Adams/Cox/Fink/Fox](#)
[Complete 10 Inch Series](#)
[Dancing on Water](#)
[Descansos Past](#)
[Descent](#)
[FADE](#)
[LAST THINGS](#)
[LIGHT THAT FILLS THE WORLD](#)
[MARIA FALLING AWAY](#)
[On the Leopard Alter](#)

Anthony Cole [Torque](#)

Julie Cole [Heritage and Ringtones](#)

Tim Cole [Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)
[Heritage and Ringtones](#)

Charlie Collins [Winter Pilgrim arriving](#)
[Scala, the Navigators](#)

Janyce Collins [Jim Fox-Last Things](#)

Mark Collins [Kagel](#)

Michael Cote [Vex Ohm](#)

Charles Compo [Great Sunset](#)

Jim Connolly [Kaiser/Diaz-Infante-Sextet](#)

[Jim Connolly and the Gove Country String Quartet](#)

[Jim Connolly and the Gove County Philharmonic](#)
[Time Stops to Visit](#)

Joe Conroy [Recent Fossils](#)

Time of the Grets
Young and Innocent Days

Lawrence Cook [Eric Zinman Ensemble](#)

Cooper, Jerome [The Psyche](#)

Marghreta Cordero [From Shelter](#)

Sylvie Courvoisier [Lucas Niggli & Sylvie Courviosier](#)

Anthony Cox

Rick Cox [Accidents with Nature](#)
[Maria Falling Away](#)
[Fade](#)

Lol Coxhill [Boundless](#)

Marilyn Crispell [Any Terrain Tumultous](#)

Frank Crijins [Blast](#)

Tim Crowther [Shell of Certainty](#)

Chris Cutler [Cassiber, Beauty and the Beast](#)
[Shopping Live @ Victo](#)
[Hangmans Hill](#)
[Leg-end](#)
[Two Gentlemen in Verona](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Dalaba, Leslie

[DalabaFrithGlickRiemanKiehlstedt](#)

Dal Ri, Lorenzo [Bespoken](#)

Davis, Rhodrie

[Navigations](#)

[Heritage and Ringtones](#)

[Ghost Notes](#)

Dawkins, Kyle [Puzzle](#) [Georgia Guitar Quartet](#)

Elton Dean [Bremen to Bridgewater](#)

Dan De Chellis [Shapes](#)

Deep Listening Band [Unquenchable Fire](#)

Dempster, Stuart [Unquenchable Fire](#)

Jim Denley [Through Fire, Crevice and the Hidden Valley](#)

Deepop, [9 Meals from Anarchy](#)

Jean Derome [Keep the Dog](#)

Andrew Deutsch [Voice Coil](#)

Andrew DeWar [Quartet Solo Pieces](#)

Diamond, Valerie [Adams,Cox,Fink,Fox](#)

Di Grassi, Franco [Franco DiGrassi/Gianni Lenoci](#)

[16](#) with Gianni Lenoci

Dieler, B [Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise](#)

DIXON, BILL [Vade Mecum 1994 Soul Note/ Milano](#)

Vicki Dodd, [Activavoco](#)

Dóra, Attila [Process 2](#)

Doran, Christy, [Acoustic Icicles](#)

Drake, Jeremy [Bedouin Hornbook](#)

Drewniary, Rafal [Process 2](#)

Erica Duke-Kirkpatrick [Descasos Past](#)

Arlene Dunlap [On the Leopard Alter](#)

[Point of Conception](#)

Dutz, Brad [2 Many Axes](#)
[Kaiser/Diaz-Infante Sextet](#)

[Obliteration Percussion Quartet](#)

Dymny, Michal [Process 2](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Edge City collectivee [Guitarrasalto](#)

Georg Edlinger [Rain Dances](#)
[Earth Dances](#)

[Earth Dances](#)

Eisenbeil, Bruce [Shadow Machine](#)

Brad Ellis [On the Leopard Altar](#)

Chuck Ellis [Urubamba](#)

Lisle Ellis [We Are](#)

Elmassion [Maria Falling Away](#)

Embryo [Ni Hau](#)

Evans, Robert [Liquid Metal Dreaming](#)

Exzoskeleton [Exploring Biology](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Massimo Falascone [Takla Makan](#)

Fahres, Michael [Michael Fahres The Tubes](#)

Fahndrich, Walter [Ramie/espazi/Espaces/Spaces](#)

Favre, Pierre [Portrait](#)

Feather, Niel [Thus, Tripod Mind](#)

Feldman, Mark [Haiku](#)

Fell Simon [Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)
[Heritage and Ringtones](#)

Pure Water Construction
Ghost Notes

Feigin, Misha Both Kinds of Music
Recent Fossils

Beatrix Ward-Fernandez Scala

Fernandos, Marcus We Are

Feza, Mongezi Bremen to Bridgewater

Fink, Michael Jon A Temperament for Angels
Adams,Cox,Fink,Fox

Florino Don, 9 Meals From Anarchy

Fjellestad, Hans **33**

Luca Formentini Subterraneans

Foster, Greg Alabama

Fox, Jim Last Things
Adams, Cox , Fink, Fox

Franklin, Steve Shell of Certainty

Freeman, Thomas Fade

Frey, Adrian Sonic Calligraphy

Friedman,Bruce Bedouin Hornbook

Frith, Fred Leg-end
Friends and Enemies
Two Gentlemen in Verona
Keep the Dog
Speechless

Futterman, Ron Alabama

Reviews in green have expired.

Gallen, Nikolai [Stemme 8](#)

Garland, Peter [String Quartets](#)

Gamper, David [Unquenchable Fires](#)

Gayle, Philip [Mommy Row](#)

Gelb, Philip [Purple Wind](#)

Genera, Mike

[gig at Victory, Toronto, Sept 5, 2000](#)

Gerstadt , Frode [ISM](#)

Getter, Joseph [Recent Fossils](#)

Giardullo, Joe [Unquenchable Fires](#)

Godard, Michel [Double Jeu Trio](#)

Vinny Golia

[Circular Logic, Music for Woodwinds](#)

[Duets](#) with Susan Allen

[Trignition](#)

Good, Steve [Recent Fossils](#)

[Time of the Grets](#)

[Young and Innocent Days](#)

Goodman, Greg [Recent Fossils](#)

Gould, David [9 Meals from Anarchy](#)

George Graewe

[Live at Banlius Bleus](#)

Christian Graf [Double Jeu Trio](#)

Greaves, John [Leg-end](#)

[Hangmans Hill](#)

Gratowski, Frank [Gestalten](#)

Groder, Brian [Torque](#)

Guberman, Morgan Torpor

Guhl, Andy Below Beyond Above

Gustafsson , Mats Blues

Nicola Guazzaloca Samsingen

Reviews in green have expired.

Andy Haas 9 Meals from Anarchy

Jonathan Haas Off-Hour Wait State

Laura Hackstein Jim Connolly and the Gove Country String Quartet

Rich Halley Live at Beanbenders

Tom Hamilton

Off-Hour Wait State

Hamilton, Tod My Dear Siegfried

Hamilton, Tom Shadow Machine

Hanuman Sextet 9 Meals From Anarchy

Hardy, Marina Pink Violin

Bob Harsh Viovox

Hassell, Jon Michael Fahres-The Tubes

Hay, Emily We Are

Hayward, Charles Keep the Dog

Hertlein, Rosie Dreaming Wide Awake

Knut Hamre A

Hanuman Sextet [Confusing the Devil](#)

Haapala, Tuomo [Vattenvirlar/Movements in Rapid Water](#)
[Sonic Poems](#)

[Luft: Iskra](#)

Josh Hanson, I love you

Hassay, Gary [A Survivor's Smile](#)

[Another Shining Path](#)

Hassell, John [Maria Falling Away](#)

Emily Hay [Like Minds](#)

Phil Haynes [Trad Corrosion](#)

Hemingway, Gerry [Gestalten](#)

Heenan, Chris [Bedouin Hornbook](#)

Hennan, Mark [Great Sunset](#)

Hennenan Strijkkwartet [Pes](#)

Henry Cow [Leg end](#)

Hession, Paul [Meanwhile, Back in Sheffield...](#)

Heyner, Matt [9 Meals From Anarchy](#)

Hildreth, Todd [Young and Innocent Days](#)

[Recent Fossils](#)

Hinds, Erik [A.S.A.P. Wings](#)

Anna-Kajsa Holmberg [Samsungen](#)

Hobbs, Christopher [Sudoku 82](#)

Holmes, John [My Bongo](#)

Hooker, William [Great Sunset](#)

Horist, Bill [Sleep Hammer](#)

Hovda, Elenor [Coastal Traces](#)

Humphrey [Piano: The Perpetual Motion](#)

Houle, Francois [Live at Banlius Bleues](#)

[Any Terrain Tumultous](#)

Huber, Mark [HV West](#)

Hultgren, Craig [Electro-accoustic Cello Book](#)

Humler, Anna [Kepland Serenades](#)

[The Wind at Beni Midar](#)

Hyperion Ensemble [Musique Action](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Ibarra, Susie [Dreaming Wide Awake](#)

Ielasi Giuseppe [Fringes](#)

Irgens-Moller, Christer [Experimental Music from Denmark '96](#)

James, Susan [On the Leopard Altar](#)

Jarvinen, Arthur [Erase the Fake](#)

Jasnoch, John [The Long & Short of It](#)

[Disconnected Bliss](#)

[Scala](#)

Jaws of the Flying Carpet [Blue-Eyed Easter Island Babies](#)

Jeff Kaiser Ockodektet, [13 Themes for a Triskadekaphobic](#)

Jenkins, Leroy [The Psyche](#)

Johnson, Brian [Seasons : Vermont, The](#)

Jorgens, Pete [Experimental Music from Denmark '96](#)

Joshua, Sharona [Bones of all Men](#)

Jurgens, Karen [Unquenchable
Fire](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Kaiser, Henry
[Yo Miles](#)

[Recent Fossils](#)
[Friends and Enemies](#)

Kaiser, Jeff [Jeff Kaiser Ocodektet](#)
[Kaiser/Diaz-Infante Sextet](#)

Kato, Osam [Do the Glimpse](#)

Kazamaki ,Takashi [Takashi Kazamaki Live in New
York, 1897](#)

Keene, Richard [Great Sunset](#)

Kelly, Greg ["nmperign's 2nd CD"](#)

Kent, Peter [Accidents with Nature](#)

Kerman, David [Blast](#)

Kihlstedt, Carla [DalabaFrithGlickRiemanKielstedt](#)

Killick, Eric Hinds [A.S.A.P. Wings](#) "live" with Bob Stagner & Dennis Palmer

Killick [Killick Bull***](#)

Killick [Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise](#)

Killick, [Scientists Levitate Small Animals \(Zepublic\)](#)

Klapper, Martin [Musica Genera](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Diane Labrosse [Telepathie](#)

Steve Lacy [10 of Dukes + 6 Originals](#)
[Associates](#)

Dominic Landolf [Triblu](#)

Mike Lastra [I love you](#)

Lawler, Keenan [Ut Gret-Recent Fossils](#)

Joelle Leandre [No Waiting](#)
[Shopping Live @ Victo](#)

Jorgen Lekkfeldt [Experimental Music from Denmark '96](#)

Lenoci , Gianni [16 with Franco DiGrassi](#)

Lentz, Daniel [On the Leopard Altar](#)

Eric Leonardson [Animus](#)
[Radio Reverie in the Waiting Place](#)

Tony Levin [Colours Fulfilled](#)

Gianni Lenoci [De Grassi-Lenoci](#)

Peter Landis -Tres Bass [Istia](#)

Kurt Leege

[M'Lumba vs. Kobalt 6](#)

[Spinning Tourists in a City of Ghosts](#)

Phoebe Legere [Blind Pursuits](#)

George Lewis [Associates](#)
[Usual Turmoil and Other Duets](#)

Liebig, Stewart [Kepland Serenades](#)

Ligeti, Lucas [Shadow Glow](#)

Giancarlo Locatelli [Takla Makan](#)

Lockwood, Anna [The Glass World](#)

Ivan Lombardi
[Triblu](#)

Robin Lorentz [Erase the Fake](#)
[Light that Fills the World](#)

Lowe, Jessica [On the Leopard Altar](#)

Jamie Ludbroc [Dissect the](#)
[Body](#)

Fredi Luscher
[Opus 1](#)

Paul Lytton [At the Vortex](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Mackie, Paul [On the Leopard Altar](#)

Machine for Making Sense [Dissect the Body](#)

MacKay, Gordon [String Quartets](#)

Mahler, David [Voice of the Poet](#)

Mahler, Fred [Speechless](#)

Makihara, Toshi [Another Shining Path](#)

Malik, Ralphe **Resonance**

Manderscheid, Dieter [Gestalten](#)

Mann, Chris [Trios](#) Frog Peak Collaborations Project

Marron [Sleep Hammer](#)

Marshall Marotte [Scientists Levitate Small Animals](#)

Marsh, George [Game No Game](#)

Margot Mathieu [Speechless](#)

Miya Masaoko [Accordion, Koto w/Pauline Oliveros](#)

[For Birds, Planes and Cellos](#)

[Purple Wind](#)

[While I Was Walking I Heard a Sound](#)

Mathews, Doug [Torque](#)

Mathieu, W.A. [Game No Game](#)

Marchesano, Frederico [Divertissement](#)

[Mysterioso-Automatismi](#)

Marclay, Christian **More Encores**

Maroney, Denman [How the LIght Gets In](#)

Marsh, Tony [Shell of Certainty](#)

Marslow, George [Game No Game](#)

Martusciello, Elio

Martusciello, Maruizio

Masaoka, Miya **Crepuscular Music**
Usual Turmoil and Other Duets

Mateen, Sabir [Resonance](#)

Mathieu, W. A. [Game No Game](#)

Mattacks, Dave **Bones of all Men**

Mattos, Marcio **Navigations**

Mauri, Simone **Produzione Propria Ensemble**

Loren Mazzacaine-Connor [Airs](#)

MAZUR, Rafal [Process 2](#)

McCain, Chris / Billy Pierce [Froggin Around](#)

McDonald, Scott [Activavoco](#)

McFee, Joe **Joe McPhee Quartet** [Unquenchable Fire](#)

McGregor, Chris [Bremen to Bridgewater, Brotherhood of Breath](#)

STEVE McLEAN Ensemble [The Opposite of War](#)

McLeod, Jeff [Ye Shall Be Cut Into Many Pieces](#)
Stiff Miserable Goodbye
[Scientists Levitate Small Animals \(Zepublic\)](#)

Meloche, Chris [Impossible Shapes](#)

Meinberg, Stephen [Vitamine](#)

Merce, Sergio [Continuo](#)

Migone, Christof [Vex Ohm](#)

Miller, Donald **Flood**

Miltenberger, Bart [Aktivavoco](#)

Mimmo, Gianni [Bespoken](#)

Minton, Phil [Minton, Butcher, Hirt: Two Concerts](#)

Miranda, Eduardo Electroacoustic Music from Latin America

Misterka, Seth Construction, Destruction, Recreation
Nine Compositions

Mitchell, Roscoe [Solo 3](#)

Moholo, Louis [Bremen to Bridgewater, Brotherhood of Breath](#)

Monaco, Alfredo Electroacoustic Music from Latin America

Monk, Kirsten [Jim Conolly and the Gove Country String Quartet](#)

Monico, Filippo Takla Makan

Montgomery, Gen Ken [Pondfloorsample](#)

Moore, Jackson Nine Compositions

Moore, Michael I'm An Indian Too

Moore, Thurston Barefoot in the Head

Morgan, Neal [Project Soundwave](#)

Mori, Ikue Duets [The Opium War](#)

Morris, Joe Antennae

Morris, Sam [Yonilicious](#)

Mark Morton [Trios for Deep Voices](#)

Moss, David [Time Stories](#)

Moslang, Norbert [Below Beyond Above](#)

Mota, Manuel Rafael Toral

Muller-Graf, Eveline UnFolkUs

Reviews in green have expired.

NAKATANI, Tatsuya [Primal Communication](#) 2007

Stephen Nachmanovich [Free Play](#) excellent book, on
philosophy and practices of free improvisation

Nakagawa Hiroshi [Haco](#)

Nash Robert [Contre-Contre Basse,](#)
[I Methode,Incomplete et Extreme](#)

Nazarian, Parik [Michael Fahres-The Tubes](#)

Newman,Kurt [Live gig at Victory, Toronto, Sept. 5, 2000](#)

Newman, Harris [Accidents with Natiure](#)

Newman, Maria [Accidents with Nature](#)

Newman, Thomas [Maria Falling Away](#)

Newton, Barry [Light that Fills the World](#)
[Descansos,Past](#)

Newton, Lauren [Shopping Live @ Victo](#)

New Quartet [Blue Rhizome](#)

Nicol, Simon [Bones of all Men](#)

Nicolay Keith [Jamaica](#)

Nicols, Maggie [Sequences 72 and 73](#)

Nieman Paul [Sequences 72 and 73](#)

Nijdam, Jan [Kontrans 343](#)

Niggli, Lucas [Lucas Niggli and Sylvie Courvoisier,](#)

Noodle Shop: Elliott Sharp, Jonathan Segal, Attila Engin, John Kruth

[Moon Dog Girl](#)

Nyenhuls, John Henry
Bogus Piano Concerto

Reviews in green have expired.

Ochs, Larry **Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise**

Oddbar Trio [LOST ART CAFE](#)

Jim O Rourke **Rafael Toral**

Satsuki Odamura **Dissect the Body**

D. J. Olive [The Opium War](#)

Max Oliver **Erboline, Das Boat**

OLIVEROS, Pauline [Accordion-Koto](#)
[Deep Listening Band: Joe McPhee Quartet](#)
[Dreaming Wide Awake](#)
[Unquenchable Fire](#)
[Lion's Eye/ Lion's Tale](#)
[Voice Coil](#)

Opaque [New Ways to Criticize](#)

Vagn Olsson **Experimental Music from Denmark '96**

Osiel, Marianne [How the Light Gets In](#)

Ostertag, Bob [Keep the Dog](#)

Tony Oxley **Sequences 72 and 73**

Reviews in green have expired.

Gary Pahler [Recent Fossil](#)

Palmer, Dennis [A.S.A.P. Wings](#)

Palestine, Charlemagne [A Sweet Quasimodo Between Black Vampire Butterflies for Maybeck](#)

Daniel Panasenکو [Urubamba](#)

Panhuysen, Paul [Partitas for Long Strings](#)

Panzer, Elizabeth [Dancing in Place](#)

Paredes, Robert [Forgetting and Remembering](#)

Palmer, Dennis [Purple Wind](#)

Parker, Evan **[Bremen to Bridgewater, Brotherhood of Breath](#)**
[At the Vortex](#)
[Sequences 72 and 73](#)
[Withdrawal](#)

Parker , William [Another Shining Path](#)

Parkins, Margaret [The Opium War](#)

Parkins, Zeena [The Opium War](#)
[Keep the Dog](#)

Parnell, Dennis [On the Leopard Altar](#)

Peebles, Sarah [Cinnamon Sphere](#)
[Whose Forest?](#)

Perlgras, Nickendes [Die Hintere Vase](#)

Perkins, Geoff **[Sequences 72 and 73](#)**

Perkins, Tim [Buddy Systems](#)

Perris, Charles [HV West](#)

Peters, Steve [From Shelter](#)

Peterson, Marina [Quartet Solo Pieces](#)

Pezzone, Brian [Light That Fills the World](#)

[Point of Conception](#)

[Sudoku 82](#)

Phillips, Barre [Trignition](#)

Pierce, Billy [Froggin Around](#)

Polanski, Larry [TRIOS](#)
[Four Voice Canons](#)

Pontiggia, Claudio [Generator](#)
[Il Trio](#)
[ESPOIR](#)

Porter, D [Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise](#)

Powers, Greg [Raga for the Rainey Season](#)

Post Prandials [Jamacai](#)

Provini, Herve ["sSkies"](#)

Pukwana, Dudu [Bremen to Bridgewater, Brotherhood of Breath](#)

Quellet, Louis [Vex Ohm](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Rader , Abbey [Echoes](#)

Rainey, Bhob [Crawlspace](#)

["nmperign's Second CD"](#)

Nelson-Rainey, Steve [Breathing](#)

Rammel, Hal [Breathing](#)

Raw, Hilton [A Arte Da Infelicidade](#)

Rawcliff, Susan [2 Many Axes](#)

RayScot [Bedouin Hornbook](#)
[Kaiser/Diaz-Infante Sextet](#)

Raz, Carmel [Blue Rhizome](#)

Reason, Dana [Purple Wind](#)

Rechtern, Mario [Earth Dances & Rain Dances](#) **Two Cd's**

Rechtern, Mario [Earth Dances](#)

Reichman, Nathaniel [Light that Fills the World](#)

Reijseger, Ernst [I'm An Indian Too](#)

Repetto, Douglas [Trios](#)

Richard, Ferdinand [Speechless](#)

Rieman, Eric [DalabaFrithGlickRiemanKiehstadt](#)

Riot Trio [Sound](#) **James Rohr, Nate McBride, Curt Newton**

Howard Riley [Sequences 72 and 73](#)

Sam Rivers [Torque](#)

Gino Robair [Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)
[Crepuscular Music](#)
[Purple Wind](#)

Roberts. Christopher [Trios for Deep Voices](#)

Roberts, Steve [Recent Fossils](#)

Robertson, Herb [Sound Implosion](#)

Rodrigues, Amerigo [O despertar do funambulo](#)

Roper ,William [Lament of Absolom](#)

Rose, Jon [reviews lost, sorry!](#)

Rosen,Jay [Sound Implosion](#)

Eric Rosenthal [And Only Life My Lush Lament](#)
[Crawlspace](#)

Rosetta [Lune Rousse](#)

Lalo Rossi [Clepxidra](#)
Massiano Rossi [Divertissement](#)
[Mysterioso-Automatismi](#)

Roberts, Christopher [Last Cicada Singing](#)

David Rothenberg [Unamuno](#)

Rob von Roy [M'Lumba vs. Kobalt](#)
[Spinning Tourists in a City of Ghosts](#)

Roswell Rudd [Associates](#)

Adam Rudolph [Contemplations](#)

Jordan Rudess [How the Light Gets In](#)

Rik Rue **Dissect the Body**

Ann Rupel **Fabulous Drop**

Antonio Russek **Electroacoustic Music from Latin America**

John Russell **Navigations**

Rutherford, Paul **Gentle Harm of the Bourgeoisie**
Withdrawal

Reviews in green have expired.

Sait, David [Guzheng Music](#)

Samuelson, Ralph [My Dear Siegfried](#)

Sandbox Trio **Daniel Panasenکو, Chuck Ellis, Christian Heilman, with Beth Custer**
[Nocturnalis](#)

Saw, Derek [Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)

Peter Schärli [April Works](#)

Schieve, Catherine [The Animation of Lists and the Archytan Transpositions](#)

The Schismatics [Vazen Voll](#)

Martin Schutz [Fidel](#)

Schaffer, Scott [Aktivavoco](#)

Schultz, Phillip [Quartet Solo Series](#)

Sedayne [Winter Pilgrim Arriving](#)

Greg Segal [The Cram & Stuff Method...](#)
[The View- is better from the top of the Food Chain](#)

Andred Serrapiglio [Samsingen](#)

Luca Serrapiglio [Samsingen](#)

Hyam R. Sosnow [The Cram & Stuff Method...](#)

[Three CD's The View Is Better From the Top of the Food Chain](#)

[Yellow Star Mailing List](#)

[The Cram and Stuff Method](#)

Shaking Ray Levis [A.S.A.P. Wings](#)
[Purple Wind](#)

Elliot Sharp, [Hums to Terre](#)

David Shea [The Opium War](#)

Jon Sheffield [Shorehoses](#)

Al Sholl [We Are](#)

Siegfried, Karl [Criminal Mastermind](#) [Blue Rhizome](#)

Simon, John [How the Light Gets In](#)

Simonis, Lucas [Stots](#) electro-accoustic field recordings

Sirone, [Speechless](#)

Six and More [Oici Voici](#)

Smith, Brian [Puzzle, Georgia Guitar Quartet](#)

Smith, Chas [Maria Falling Away](#)
[Descent](#)
[Nakadai](#)

Gary Smith [Gary Smith John Stevens](#)

[LaDonna Smith](#) [Eye of the Storm](#)
[TransMutating](#) with **Davey Williams**
[Dice I, II](#) **Women Composers Compilation**
[Both Kinds of Music](#) with Misha Feigin
[Buddy Systems](#) with **Gino Robair**

Leo Wadada Smith [Yo Miles](#)

Phil Snyder, [Puzzle, Georgia Guitar Quartet](#)

Jason Solomon [Puzzle, Georgia Guitar Quartet](#)

Sosnow, Hyam [The View- is better from the top of the Food Chain](#)

Sune Spangberg [Luft](#)

Mathew Sperry [Kagel](#)

Splinter Orchestra [27-member improv group from Australia](#)

Stagner, Bob [A.S.A.P. Wings](#) with Dennis Palmer, Killick Erik Hinds
[Purple Wind](#)

Jim Staley [Blind Pursuits](#)

Stilley, David Ut Gret, [Recent Fossils](#)

Bruno Steffen [HV West](#)

John Stevens [Gary Smith John Stevens](#)

Michael Jeffrey Stevens [Haiku](#)

Stilley, Dave Ut Gret, [Recent Fossils](#)

Stone, Carl [Al Noor](#)

Fredy Studer [Fidel](#)

Sturt, Hilary [String Quartets](#)

Altri Suoni [Sharp Music](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Takashi, Kazamaki [Zigzag](#)

Taylor, Michael [Activavoco](#)

Tenko [The Opium War](#)

Turetsky, Bertram [Trignition](#)

[TRIOS](#) Tom Erbe-Chris Mann- Larry Polansky-

Douglass Repetto- Christian Wolff-

Tertiary Trio [Title Goes Here](#)

Theodoratus, Mia [9 Meals from Anarchy](#)

The Zero Hour [Departure of One](#)

Douglas Thierault [Keel](#)

Jo Thirion [Speechless](#)

Jon Thompson [Aktivavoco](#)

Robert Thompson [The Wind at Beni Midar](#)

Masahiko Togashi [Associates](#)

Toniamu, Toru [Do the Glimpse](#)

Tomatic 7 [Hauptstrom](#)

Olivier Toulemonde [Bug](#)

Bernard Trontin [Doubles](#)
[Double Jeu Trio](#)

Bertram Turetzsky [Trignition](#)

Matt Turner [Never Never Now](#)
[The Mouse that Roared](#)

Ultan, Alicia [From Shelter](#)

Unanimous Quorum [Recoding](#)

Ullman, Gebhard [Trad Corrosion](#)

UT GRET [Recent Fossils](#)

[Time of the Grets](#)

Van Cleve, Libby [A.S.A.P Wings](#)

Vargas, Mike [Whispering the Turmoil Down](#)

Vees, Jack [A.S.A.P. Wings](#)

Vigreux, Franck [Hums to Terre](#)

Venitucci, Luca

Vester, Kristian [Experimental Music from Denmark '96](#)

Vollman, Kira [Impropera Non Credo](#)

Vincze, Ivan [Experimental Music from Denmark '96](#)

Vitiello, Stephen [Voice Coil](#)

Voice Crack [Below Beyond Above](#)

Voigt, John [Eric Zinman Ensemble](#)

Voudouris, Dmitri [NPFAI/Palmos?NPFA13?Praxis](#)

Reviews in green have expired.

Seiji Waabi [Best Things in Life Are Still Made By Hand](#)

Marty Walker [Accidents with Nature](#)
[Light that Fills the World](#)

Beatrix Ward-Fernandez [Scala](#)

Greg Ward [Acoustic Rhizome](#)

Mark Wastell [Ghost Notes](#)
[Navigations](#)

David Watson [Fingering an Idea](#)

Trevor Watts [For You to Share](#)

[Sequences 72 and 73](#)

[Withdrawal](#)

Weller, Ellen [We Are](#)

Rich West [Bedouin Hornbook](#)

Richie West [Kaiser/Diaz-Infante Sextet](#)

Kenny Wheeler [Sequences 72 and 73](#)
[Withdrawal](#)

Dave White [Sequences 72 and 73](#)

Gregory Whitehead [Vex Ohm](#)

Todd Whittman [Zepplins](#)

Andreas Willers [Trad Corrosion](#)

Monica Wilson [Unquenchable Fire](#)

Davey Williams Recent Fossils with Ut Gret
Demo/Sdrawkcab Zzaj
Transmutating with LaDonna Smith
Both Kinds of Music with Misha Feigin, LaDonna Smith, etc.
Which Came First; The Fried Chicken or the Fried Egg? (book)
Charmed, I'm Sure
William Carlos Williams Collection Plate
Scott Wilkinson 2 Many Axes
Stevie Wishart Tibboorra
Francis Wong Gathering of Ancestors
James Wood Kagel
Brian Woodbury Variety Orchestra
Christian Wolff TRIOS
Woz Activavoco
John Wynne Ye Ren
Another Shining Path

Reviews in green have expired.

Yasuhiro, Otani [Dial](#)

Ye Ren [Another Shining Path](#)

Young, Gayle

Zach, Ingar [Heritage and Ringtones](#)

Zzaj, Rotcod [Demo/Sdrawkcab Zzaj](#)
[Sirius Intrigues](#)

Zerang, Michael Nothing is Known

Eric Zinman, [Eric Zinman Ensemble](#)

Zigoris, Dean [Young and Innocent Days](#)

[Recent Fossils](#)

Zorn, John

Zummo, Peter [My Dear Siegfried](#)
[Off-Hour Wait State](#)

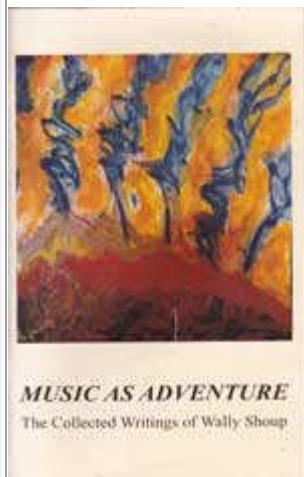
Reviews in green have expired.

Book Reviews

by Davey Williams

Music as Adventure by Wally Shoup

Nine Muses Books, 2011



2013

As one who has known Mr. Shoup for many decades now, it is clear to me that the writings in this collection of essays resonate both his uncompromising work on alto sax and the holistic exuberance underlying his deep involvement with free improvisation. In fact both of these lifelong commitments are reflected throughout this most useful and revealing book.

In offhanded, conversational writing embodied within a tough-as-nails romanticism, Shoup shells down a demanding yet deeply humane view of free improvisation, rightly presented as a developed skill, a concrete yet intuitive practice of beyond-merely-musical import.

Urgent, rhythmically emphatic and commanding a high emotional thrust-to-weight ratio, "Music as Adventure" is infused with a restless authority with which he delivers body-blows

to many misinterpretations by which free improvising has often been disregarded and disparaged.

Addressing a wide range of key aspects around this phenomenon, Shoup correctly posits this music-making outside the commercial contexts of our culture, yet he resolutely discounts improvisation as some sort of marginalized sub-genre, or what detractors and diletantes alike present as "...a series of arbitrarily created sounds which, no matter how interesting or cleverly concocted, never seem to resonate beneath the surface or suggest a deeper sense of purpose."

Rather, he shows how improvisation is "a precise art but an imprecise science...about

learning to perceive the felt but unknowable scenario of the moment and developing the technique that precisely gives voice to those feelings, however vague and shifting."

Along the way, he testifies against the jazz purists' "mantle of faux-populism," as well as taking to task various rock and pop scenes, which after flirting superficially with "improv," can often show great confidence in having completely misunderstood what this way of music making is all about.

In a chapter entitled "The Beats, the Blues and Film Noir," he notes something crucial concerning the world of free improvisers: "Those on the outside, looking not so much to be included but to proclaim their outsider-ness, are the ones who inspire, who point to valuable truths."

This demanding stance vigorously anchors the book's overarching sensibility as a strangely un-ironic, non-dualistic, even nuts-and-bolts examination of this music's multi-faceted yet singular importance, simultaneously within and beyond our cultural experience.

There are many more aspects than I'm conveying here to this concise and beautifully illustrated edition - it also presents numerous reproductions of his paintings (which to my eye actually look like his playing sounds).

In short, though, "Music as Adventure" amounts to a veritable manifesto, and constitutes a major contribution to the literature concerning free improvisation.

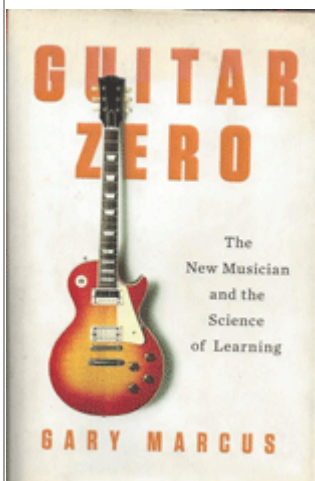
-DJW

Guitar Zero

The New Musician and the Science of Learning

Gary Marcus

Penguin Press, 2012



2013

This thoroughly interesting and rather amusing book doesn't properly have anything to do with free improvisation. Actually, the "New Musician" in the subtitle doesn't have anything to do with "New Music" either, in the sense of the sonic avant-garde. However, "Guitar Zero" does concern the beginning musician, which at least philosophically certainly has much to do with improvising.

Here's the deal: a well-known cognitive psychologist and music aficionado/consumer who possesses what he considers to be absolutely no musical talent decides at age 39 to become a guitar player.

In fact, based on the informal diagnosis of a professional colleague (who actually is a music player) he flatly declares himself at the beginning of his story to suffer from "congenital arrhythmia;" or in layman's terms: he possesses "no sense of rhythm whatsoever."

We're talking less than no chops here. Pretty much complete lack of musical understanding or awareness of how music is put together, or any notion of listening inside the music to discern its components beyond the lyrics (which is how most people identify their favorite music anyway). This is also combined with the classic butter-fingered absence of strength and digital dexterity of the non-player.

No 'audiation,' which he defines as "*Edwin Gordon's term for imaging and comprehending music.*" (Incidentally, this definition is from his 'Glossary' of musical and neurological terms at the end of the book, in which you will find "rhythm" immediately preceding "right prefrontal cortex.")

His first effort at making music begins as he starts "playing" music on video games (the book's title is a reference to the "Guitar Hero" game). Soon enough he realizes that pushing buttons on an ersatz guitar is not a true music-making endeavor. Then he goes on sabbatical from his teaching gig, when he undertakes an extended "crash-course" in playing an actual guitar, although he quickly realizes that this crash course has immediately become a life-long endeavor.

The book's main narrative lies in chronicling his first year or so of actually attempting to play guitar; and moreover in using his immense knowledge of cognition in experiential learning to address some key questions around the nature of becoming a musician, and of the origins of music as a language form in humans.

So, what does happen when the adult with 'no musical ability' takes up playing? Furthermore (and this is most germane to the book): what's going on inside our brains with music perception and production in the first place?

It's important to recall in this context that Gary Marcus is a cognitive psychologist, which means that his first area of expertise is the study of how we learn, or more pertinently here, how the areas of our brains involved in musical comprehension and production interact and change as a result of playing music.

As he explains, there is no single area of the brain responsible for music; in fact our musical abilities are a conglomerate from numerous areas, none of which is exclusively devoted to music making per se. "*Instead, virtually everything that plays a role in music has a separate "day job."* When the brain listens to music, it moonlights in a second career for which it did not originally evolve."

OK then, here's someone whose profession is understanding (even at the neurological level) how the brain works, and especially how it acquires skills. What then does he observe about the process of starting with pretty much zip relationship with the instrument?

It's at this point that things get a bit complicated in the mechanics of the learning process; and this

brings up numerous issues.

For example, take "talent." Are we somehow just born with musical inclination as hereditary (genetic) traits? Or is it simply a matter of practice and/or instruction? Is it environmental, as in coming from a musical family? Or is talent a matter of a single-source element at all?

Underlying this start-up musician's tale is Marcus' highly-regarded work in his primary field, which is defined as *"the study of how people perceive, remember, think, speak and solve problems."* (This definition, by the way, is not from this book's 'Glossary'; it's from Wikipedia, which also states that cognitive psychology generally "rejects introspection as a valid method of investigation.")

Especially with regard to actual "New Music," and certainly vis-a-vis free improvisation, his music preferences in general seems most apparent by his orientation towards populist trends as the most reliable barometer of achievement in musical development.

When he declares that *"nothing sounds good if it is not fluid and regular,"* this is part of an overarching notion that "good" music consists of two crucial elements: *"familiarity and novelty."* Confidentially though, this whole "good music" notion suggests a questionable rigidity of music appreciation, especially in light of the sonic languages of modern composing, let alone free improvising.

There is an underlying sense here of music as requiring consonance; so he declines to seriously address in any way "out" music; i.e. musics that are deliberately or incidentally insurgent by nature, occurring outside of complete conscious design, which are dissonant, atonal, indeterminate or which otherwise do not behave or occur in a context along the lines of a couple of his other requisites, "fluid and regular."

It makes little difference that he passingly references dissonance via Edgard Varese, John Cage or Arnold Schoenberg (*"...whose experiments were noble but unsuccessful..."*). It seems clear that his approach to playing is decidedly "left-brain dominant," as the old saying used to go. At any rate he does not seem interested in what might anecdotally be called 'holistic' listening, at least not as an area of great focus.

The closest he gets to improvising is describing *"a wondrous state" which the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced 'chick-SENT-me-high-ee) has called 'flow.'....a merging of action and awareness...characterized by a sense of concentration on the task at hand and a sense of control, a loss of self-consciousness, and an altered sense of time."*

I can't speak for Chick-sent-me-high-ee, but that sounds like improvisation to me. Except that in his own practice, Mr. Marcus is talking about a fairly restricted sound pallet, and an underlying limitation in the method of music making which he is examining.

In fact, although this detail remains irrelevant to the essential characteristic of "flow," he finds this *"state of joyful immersion, wherein one loses all sense of time passing"* while he's jamming with a group of 12 year old rockers at a hilariously-described "Day Jam" summer rock band camp.

Musical tastes aside, it is true that on the neurological levels any sort of practiced music making works with many related parts of the brain. As he explains, there is no single area of our noggin solely responsible for music; in fact our musical abilities occur in widespread conglomerate of numerous areas, none of which are exclusively devoted to music making per se. *"Instead, virtually everything that plays a role in music has a separate "day job." When the brain listens to music, it moonlights in a second career for which it did not originally evolve."*

This makes one wonder, though, if there may be certain other circuits that light up when the player

is using "automatic" methods, whereby 'the music' as an aesthetic object appears as a by-product of a process not necessarily intended to produce a given product at all.

This is why it would be all the more interesting if he were to look into the synaptic action when "familiarity" is beside the point, and "novelty" becomes an huge understatement.

Having said that, "Guitar Zero" is an thoroughly encompassing, intriguing and enlightening read. Aesthetic and philosophical issues aside, there is much crucial insight to be gleaned from these pages about how the musician's mind evolved and works in the course of playing music as a unique type of learning experience.

Even if he's working with a somewhat superficial aesthetic, Marcus is reaching deep here. This book presents a concise and possibly unprecedented take on the beginner's mind, and is quite charmingly written with fine storyteller's chops; and therefore "Guitar Zero" definitely qualifies as recommended reading.

-DJW

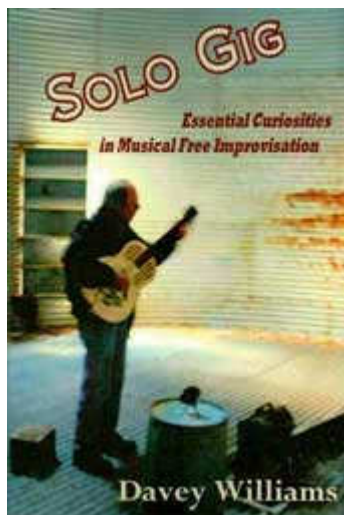
SOLO GIG

Essential Curiosities In musical Free Improvisation

by Davey Williams

Birdfeeder Editions, Birmingham, Alabama, 2011

2013



The State of Davey

Essential Curiosities in Musical Free Improvisation will reverberate in your mind for a while. Just like any sound, Davey Williams sets free to fall up proving the first statement of his book:

“Rain is similar to music, except that it falls down instead of up.”

Williams always remains the complete package in all his creative actions – music, painting and drawing, a cartoon book, and photography. In his latest writing endeavor he gives us an opportunity to peek inside his delightfully crazy and insightfully efficient way to perceive, process, and express a piece of the universe he claims as his own.

In Solo Gig, Davey employs his unique capacity to be hilariously wacky and profound at the very same time. Your mind might require some time to warp itself around an insightful curiosity or two –and your chest might be hurting from a burst of uncontrollable laughter. It might happen repeatedly to an unsuspected reader.

Williams’ style also manifest clarity and precision – as he demonstrates in his commentary on our tendency

to perceive certain sounds as “musical”:

“In truth, what is there not to understand about series of sounds? Or what to understand, for that matter? When’s the last time we didn’t understand any other conflux of sounds? All these squeaks and whirs, thumps out the window and voices in another room. The soundtrack to whatever is going on at the moment in our lives accepted and understood as part of our environment.” p.25

He also can be deliciously concise addressing sometimes cantankerous notion of musical form in contemporary: “Musical form itself is playable as another instrument.” p.59

Solo Gig also works as a manual for the casual mind bending:

”The world of the living is inhabited by other living invisible worlds, such as the world of sounds. And the unheard worlds where sounds come from. And apparently unknowable worlds where even silence does not exist. And the facebook postings for these unknowable worlds, which under adverse conditions may outnumber the worlds themselves.” p.11

Original drawings, collages, and photos add an extra dimension to the pleasant insanity of the book. I wish – some of them will print better, but hey – it probably would blow up the price of printing. Capitalism has its limitations. Though captions for the pictures look and read just fine, just take this one on p. 40--

“Music in dreams, like sex in dreams, rarely actually takes place.”

The book is peppered with William Burroughs’s flavored inserts involving Carl who “crept forward in the dark alert for enemy snipers, his tommy gun at the ready” p.75 together with other distinct patterns of the irony directed at Davey Williams the writer:” Hey everybody! I’m writing a book! And now I feel a song coming in too. Little, old country thing, goes like that...” p.53, an efficient preemptive strike that makes me think of a Roman stoic Seneca who purportedly thought that an ability to laugh at oneself is one of the main virtue of a human being.

In his book, Williams stresses the communal nature of the musical endeavor: “Somehow, being able to see (or to be a part of) the music creating itself places both audience and the players inside its unfolding. In its presence, the ongoing interaction explains itself, and we realize that the audible music is simply a sonic by-product of the collective intellect’s spirit play.” P.27

Solo Gig concludes with a dreamingly warped landscape (p.141) with the caption that reads:

“All-terrain sonic: there’s wild country out there, hombre.”

*And here the post-scriptum message from Davey Williams:

“By the way, if you are interested in music improvisation or want to know more about the scene, please check out the online website the-improvisor.com, where you will find -or contribute –articles, reviews, profiles, and many links related to this global community.”

-Misha Feigin 2013

Solo Gig is available on Amazon.com.

WISDOM OF THE IMPULSE

On the Nature of Musical Free Improvisation

Tom Nunn



2014

This comprehensive work is amazingly thorough and exhaustive.. tremendously interesting and readable, though scholarly, researched, footnoted and all the rest. Best idea for me is simply excerpt a few paragraphs to give the reader a taste of the content and it's readability.. here goes...

The *big question* often asked by those about to try free improvisation for the first time is, "What do I play?" or from the audience's perspective, "What do you do when you free improvise?" The easy answer, of course, is "Do anything!" And along with this usually goes the maxim, "You can't make a mistake in free improvisation." As explained earlier, however, these comments are more mythical than true.

Let's say three musicians who have never improvised before and who normally read music (and can play well) sit down and free improvise. What happens? Almost invariably, after trying to "sound like" free improvisation (and failing), the musicians will call on what they know how to play already, be it "*licks*" or quotations from "*the literature*". Actually, they don't have a clue as to what to do. This happens because they are under the misconception that free improvisers make the music. Therefore, they each feel personally responsible to *make something happen*, yet nothing happens as a group, nothing congeals. The music sounds either chaotic/random or collage-like. There is little or no interaction among the players.

In truth, free improvisation is not made, ut us allowed to make itself. The free improviser allows INFLUENCES to work, allows the music to form itself through his/her body and mind, and just as importantly, the group mind. But what necessarily goes along with this is a certain kind of intense concentration on the music as it happens (as well as some level of technical proficiency). What the three novice improvisers (in spite of their technical proficiency) are failing to do is simply to *listen*. Each one is so focused on what she/he is *responsible for* individually that there is little or no attention to the potential music, itself. As elementary as this seems, it is perhaps the greatest hurdle, initially, in learning to free improvise.

.....

In that period of silence just before a performance begins, the free improviser should ideally have *nothing* in mind, the first sound being entirely impulsive. The instant the sound is heard, the music begins; everything from here on is responsive, whether consciously or subconsciously. And being a performance, the response is necessarily spontaneous. The Intelligent Body goes to work, not only generating sound, but generating musical ideas as well, ideas which capture the attention of the Intellect....

.....

Music, itself is fleeting--it's here, it's gone. The next time is different, never the same. Change is the dynamic basis of music, of cours: it is a temporal art articulated through change over time moment by moment.. And, of course, change functions historically, period by period, cycle by cycle.....Change, after all, is the succor of creativity.

Nunn forages topics such as the Complex Nature of Processes, Confounding

Principles of Complexity, the Voice of New Music, the Voice of Improvised Music, Networking, Experimental/Original Instruments in FreeImprovisation, Education and Group Exercises.. Discussions, Examples, Live Performance vs. Recording, Producing, Contextualization, Projection, Flow Perception, Impressions, Influences and Processes, and Critical Listening, to be brief. While the designations may seem arbitrary and personalized (as opposed to "scientific"), he's hitting close to a workable frame of reference for an area notoriously troublesome for those relying on logic to interpret the ineffable, or for those who glibly believe that free improvisation is somehow completely beyond logic. In fact, this is thorough enough that I could flunk a test on it.

-Davey Williams

Four books by Jeffrey Agrell

-Improvisation Games for Classical Musicians

GIA Publications, 2008-2013



2014

Ostensibly aimed at academically trained players, these three books address an issue long held as endemic to classical musicians: a self-imposed inability to improvise. Each volume comprises large variety of insight-provoking, direction-changing "games" and exercises which focus on types of proactive details (shifting interactions, player/orchestration awareness, situational set-ups, aural mechanisms, etc.), all specifically designed to unglue classically-trained music readers from the sheet music.

These games generally resemble instances of the sorts of phenomena that we run across all the time perchance in free improvising sessions, which Agrell has isolated and categorized, and presented somewhat in the style of a field guide.

These books are spiral bound and, like the ubiquitous jazz standards "fake books," they are obviously meant to be integral to the making of the music. As such they fall definitely in the

"how-to" department of free improvising, which might seem a conundrum to someone who finds improvisation to be a self-evident and self-revealing process. However, there has long existed a need for this kind of instruction within the homogeneous, repertoire-driven milieu of the musical academia, which has traditionally insisted that improvisation is either an amusing aside or mindless noodling, sometimes "taken seriously" as an entirely illegitimate activity; at any rate unnerving to undertake for fear of sounding unprofessionally "wrong."

While both of these concerns may seem laughable to committed improvisers, this can be a real issue for those who have always played music only according to how they were instructed and directed by their professors and conductors. That is, in terms of improvising, some of the very finest musicians are total novices, having never encountered working concepts of real-time music making via in-the-moment invention.

These exercises and etudes seem intended as 'gateway' techniques, so to speak, although the upshot still seems oddly product-oriented. For example, consider this passage from the introduction to "Improvised Chamber Music:"

"Before you know it, you will be able to perform a new piece along with your regular chamber ensemble repertoire. Watch the delight and wonder on the audience's faces as they hear you make up on the spot a very cool new piece..."

Well, of course he's right about that in many instances, although if these games are played out thoroughly, into the extreme realms of complete sonic inclusion, there can exist under certain performance circumstances an excellent chance that this 'very cool new piece' can find the musicians on the spot indeed, watching something very unlike delight and wonder on the audience's faces.

Possibly irrelevant audience reactions aside, such extremes might not be crucial to the intentions set forth in these four (slightly overlapping) textbooks anyway, however. At any rate, by including 'an improvisation piece' as part of the "regular" repertoire, Mr. Agrell is not necessarily advocating free improvisation as a singular-focus endeavor, but he is quite significantly supplying its technique as an invaluable adjunct to conventional composer/performer methods of music making. Therefore, from the standpoint of free improvisation at large, these books constitute an important, even vital component of modern musical pedagogy.

DJW

the improvisor festival

~ a review and overview of improvisation

2010

the improvisor Festival (July 30-August 29, 2010), celebrated a unique underground movement of creative activity particular to the town of Birmingham. Beginning in 1976 and continuing 34 years to the present, dance, music and literary improvisation, inspired by a collective of surrealist writers, musicians and dancers native to Southside Birmingham, generated an indigenous, authentic, groundbreaking period of imaginative work based on collaborations between dance, music, and free writing artists. In dance history books, this kind of movement was only noted by scholars as taking place in New York City during the Judson Church era of the 1970's. Yet, dance history books have proven not to be complete; a gap of knowledge exists in terms of this particular creative era that was part of a national improvisation movement.

Only known by local witnesses who watched or took part in the work, this form of creative scholarship is noticeably absent from national archives reflecting the history of dance improvisation. When speaking of 'those days,' when dance and music were performed as a freer form of expression, past program director of the American Dance Festival, Arthur Schultz Waber, made his point, stating how "the kind of dance and music improvisation, the work you were doing back then (1978-80),

was way ahead of its time” (Raleigh, NC, 2000).

The dance and music artists he was referring to were Doug Carroll, Susan Hefner, Mary Horn, Wally Shoup, LaDonna Smith, Juanita Suarez, Sylvia Toffel (Sycamore), and Davey Williams.

the improvisor festival created a historic period of dynamic creative activity with 30 days of live dance, music and poetry improvisation at myriad locales throughout the city. Directed by Birmingham’s LaDonna Smith, international performer and editor of **the improvisor** *International Journal of Free Improvisation*, the festival drew from an extensive roster of national/international artists from Alabama, New York, California, Washington, Georgia, Florida, Italy, England, and India. Artists from a variety of disciplines came together to not only perform but to remember, reconnect and establish new, future improvisation collaborations. During group performances and reflections, it became apparent to all involved that improvisation had and continues to be a vital part of creative growth. Still, there is more to be said about this little known form of art making.

One might ask, “What is improvisation and why is it significant?” First of all, improvisation is about creating out of and being in the moment through performance and can be achieved through voice, movement, text, music/sound. This medium of expression is not per se function-oriented yet it is very practical. No product is visible once an improvisation has taken place. Even so, we (the improviser and viewer participant) can come to know how to solve problems creatively because this kind of work draws from imaginary worlds of possibilities. Improvisation is not exclusive, since we all improvise every day just to survive, but specifically in reference to the professional improviser, this kind of performer, like an alchemist, exercises a power to change one thing into another.

By digging into a realm one might call ‘ambiguity,’ where ideas have yet to emerge, the improviser creates a world of their own making. In essence that is what art making is all about: creating worlds. Art making is about playing with ideas. Improvisation is also about critically engaging with the world. Hence, improvisation is about empowerment, thinking critically, solving one’s problems many different ways.

“Improv” is a healthy form of activity for the creative soul as demonstrated at the Bottle Tree, August 13th, by performers in “Pico Dorado” from Florida, The Shaking Ray Levis from Tennessee with the legendary chameleon southerner, Col. Bruce Hampton of Georgia appearing in raw improvisation, and another assembled performing ensemble that has been part of, or fundamental to the Birmingham “improv” scene since the 1970’s. Four sets comprised the repertory for the evening; engaged and inspired music exchanges between players in tune with each other, playing off of each other’s musical nuances generated a connection between player and audience that was palpable. It was as if everyone took a journey that ended only when an intuitive consensus had been arrived at by each player, all taking place simultaneously.

“*The Assembled*” was visually punctuated with an interesting counter point of imagery as presented by Claire Barratt whose striking poses created a kind of inter-textuality to the music. Jill Burton’s entrance, seductive and enticing in terms of what might transpire added another level of visual tension to the music. Doug Carroll’s playing anchored the group’s musical foray into an anti-melodic wilderness. What was most refreshing with all the music presented was the purposeful intent to stay away from the expected, the status quo.

Improvisation, as demonstrated at Children’s Dance Foundation for “Just Move It!” is so much more than dancers just ‘winging it’ for it involves a piercing attention, a discerning self awareness of time, space and action. The possibility of formulating unusual yet familiar relationships between individuals/objects/text is intrinsic to the heroic act of creating out of the moment.

This was seen in a duet between Mary Horn and Sycamore Toffel. Witty in their breathtaking interpretation of women wearing different leveled shoes, the world they conveyed could have been based on fashion models, or modern Asian geishas, or just two clowns on parade. To multi-task in this kind of

creative environment can be overwhelming to the novice performer because there are so many choices to draw from but for these seasoned performers it is much like white water rafting; the improviser navigates past inflexible ideas (rocks), while maneuvering his/her way down pathways leading to new territories and fresh opportunities.

The concert could also have been titled “Just Have Fun” for Susan Hefner and Michael Evans created a comical narrative that poked fun at the absurd boundaries existent between performer and audience, and all was done while still keeping a beat. Working with body limitations can be productive, and offers unique ways of looking at narrative renderings.

A new generation of “improv” performers performed as well; rising to the occasion in terms of inventiveness was the work of Stella Nystrom, Rhea Speights, Deborah Mauldin, and Ashley Muth. Butoh entrances with suspensions of time created an interesting tension between Mauldin and Muth.

A picnic was evoked with the help of food. A cake. The success of this piece rested in the interplay between the soloist, and the absurdities that could be constrewed from the object of desire, a live improvisation performance art, call it dance without music, satisfying the appetite of both the audience and the performer.

If improvising is such an exciting venture, one might ask: Why is it that many performers do not perform improvisations? Is it because improvisation is easy to do? I have heard performers comment, “I can do that!” “Anyone can do that!” Yet I have noticed how few do. Why is that? First of all, improv reveals to the viewer the nuances of a performers’ life in a personal way, making the performer vulnerable to the interpretation of others, since during an improvisation, no time is available to negotiate our presence, to re-design our selves. And so, what you see is what you get. Such a relationship between performer and viewer has been identified by film theorist, Laura Mulvey as “the male gaze” (1973), when a performer evokes a sense of “to- be-looked-at-ness.” Although the “male gaze” applies to anyone who performs in any kind of venue, in improvisation it is particularly applicable since the performer is creating something out of “beingness.”

In translation this means that the art of improvisation is risky business and not for the faint of heart; the improviser has to be confident, fearless and resourceful. I notice how control freaks do not fare well with improv since the “known” and “unknown” interface (Foster cited in Gere, xiii, 2003) continuously, reconfiguring each new rising moment with another to become something else. Improvisation is a kind of anarchy, a performer’s claim to artistic freedom, oblivious to the restrictions of codified art making, and yet sophisticated in how performer identities surface and are negotiated. Thus, improvisation is the voice of an intelligence that exhibits no vested interest in stereotypical thinking.

I have also heard audiences respond enthusiastically, in turn asking, “How do you do that?” Audiences play a different role during an improvisation because they are active participants in the creation of an improv, which is why I refer to them as viewer participants. Improvisation is shamelessly interactive, engaging audiences by sharing narrative secrets, making the audience a witness to the daring and cunning a performer works to make manifest. At the culmination of a performance, viewer participants cite moments during the performance that even the performer was not aware of, sharing perspectives that privilege the viewer.

As a guest artist for the *Improvisor Festival* and entering the creative scene from the outside, (I have been teaching in the north for 30 years), I had the chance to see Birmingham again with fresh eyes. What I saw was a whirlwind of activity that engaged a lot of familiar yet new faces. Young people, new to the free music scene congregated on floors, attentive to and positively responsive to what they were hearing. I saw communities of artists come together and exchanging their talents. I saw improvisations taking place in alternative spaces as well as established venues like clubs and restaurants, in open air parking lots, in children gallery sites and the Children’s Dance Foundation Dance

Theater. Birmingham is an “improv” town that has a growing, vital, unique improvisation history. The community outreach work LaDonna Smith has invested in has inspired me to ignite this kind of activity in the north.

In closing, the most significant reason why improvisation matters is this: Professional practitioners of improvisation are comfortable and serious about ‘creative play.’ When a sense of child’s play is evoked, one ‘is in the zone’ of an improvisation because the artist is always striving to draw from child-like resources. Pablo Picasso must have been thinking about the disposition of the improviser when he once said, “All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”

Juanita Suarez

2010

Old Timey Avant-Garde in the New South

Dynamic Systems, Free Play and Improvisation

by [Heather Palmer](#)

2014



Misha Feigin, Dennis Palmer, Bob Stagner, Davey Williams at Eyedrum in Atlanta, photo: LaDonna Smith 2009

I have no reservations about the value of improvisation. To me it has been the single most liberating factor of my life, socially, politically, and musically.

-Tony Oxley

I play free music because it can't be grown out of. I change, the music changes. If I have an intuition I can follow it. Any intuition or development that I may have is not going to be restricted or limited by the setting within which I operate. And that's where the freedom lies.

-Evan Parker

Performance practices that resist systemization and frustrate expectations promote a dynamic exchange of expressive possibilities that reach across social, cultural, economic, and national borders. For example, the foundations of improvisation demand risk, trust, openness--playing from a level of consciousness removed from the purely rational and knowable. These foundations all have liberatory potential—that of co-creation with other players, with difference, with mystery. Improvisation as a practice calls us to a shared sense of community based on these qualities and challenges, a call with a particular sense of urgency given our current cultural climate in the face of globalization.

The creation of dynamic systems in independent improvisational communities helps to define spaces autonomous from exclusion and segregation. Further, the performative moments supported by these communities serve as a model for ethical relations based on the concept of improvisation as inter-subjectivity in practice. This article both theorizes and provides concrete examples of how improvisation provides this liberatory model of communication that frees up spaces for the construction of new—and more ethical--social arrangements. Ultimately, I argue that this radically communicative moment offers us a model for ethical relations based on the practice of what is called inter subjectivity--how being as a radical becoming occurs as a mutual co-arising, contingent among and between interdependents in the improvisational moment. This process occurs in both acts of willful listening and playing.

In order to concretize these concepts, I'll briefly trace the one trajectory of the independent improvisation community as it has developed in the Southern United States, the 20-year history of the Shaking Ray Levi Society (SRLS), the South's first non-profit 501C3 organization dedicated exclusively to promoting improvisational music through performances and educational outreach programs. The performing duo, The Shaking Rays (SRL), are the first US group to record on Incus records, the record label of British free improvisational guitarist Derek Bailey. The Society is comprised of musicians and artists who have performed and recorded with other well-known players from the improvisational community as Fred Frith, John Zorn, Davey Williams and LaDonna Smith. They have also produced shows with the likes of Anthony Braxton, Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, and Andrea Centazzo, just to name a few in the long list of who's who veterans and emerging players in the free improvisational world that the Society has worked with. Conceived and led by the Chattanooga, Tennessee-based team of Dennis Palmer and Bob Stagner, the Levis use storytelling,

synthesizers, samplers and percussion to achieve their distinctive sound.



Dennis Palmer and Bob Stagner at Eyedrum, Atlanta Ga 2009

(photo: LaDonna

Smith)

As we'll explore, the multifaceted and incongruous history of the Shaking Ray Levi Society demonstrates that unlikely groups of performers who connect in improvisational settings open dynamic systems of communication that often overcome the reduction of the unknown to simplistic categories and concepts, even in those areas like the South that are defined by stasis and tradition.

On Productive “Non-Knowledge”

As many have pointed out, improvisation as a practice has been a critical component in artistic expression, yet it remains a controversial subject in contemporary Western music and in the academy, despite being the oldest form of musical expression. Distinctive characteristics of the practice of improvisation such as call and response, recursivity, reflexivity, feedback, and recombinant sonic explorations of elements that would not “naturally” occur together in standard musical structures, stress the fleeting and radically flexible creative moment. Such sensibilities do not necessarily lend themselves to the goals of academic knowledge and the search for foundational certainties. Essentially the job of an academic is arrest the dynamism of systems, the flux of experience, to slow it down, to categorize and define it. Thus the aims of improvisation are clearly counter to those of the academic.

Incus Records founder and legendary guitarist Derek Bailey explains this tension between the academic project and the project of improvisation: “Improvisation is always changing and adjusting, never fixed, too elusive for analysis and precise description; essentially non-academic. And more than

that: any attempt to describe improvisation must be, in some respects, a misrepresentation . . . ” He then goes on, in characteristic fashion, to baldly state: “Only an academic would have the temerity to mount a theory of improvisation.”

Similarly, I’m not necessarily concerned with mounting a comprehensive theory here, but rather in exploring the sensibilities and possibilities of improvisation and the knowledge it generates.

The improviser’s ability to tap into the flows of playing/sensing is a type of knowledge that is not common, a non-knowledge, a sensibility that is not expected or status-quo. As theorist Georges Bataille explains, “man only gains access to the notion which is most loaded with burning possibilities by opposing common sense.” Or perhaps opposing common sense in the pursuit of non-knowledge entails that one never knows exactly what one is doing, that one never feels at home or at ease, that one isn’t seduced by the comforts of familiarity, identity, certainty, or mastery in terms of one’s response, and continued responsiveness, one’s openness to the body, the world, to expressive possibilities. I notice that when I forget myself as a “stable” or closed, discrete subject, as performing improvisers do, and lose myself in the materiality of sound, there is a slippage of “me” as a stable subject. This slippage also functions as a sort of sacrifice, the sacrifice of self as the singular and personal interiorized subject. This type of sacrifice is a necessary part of the practice of improvisation, and makes true communication possible as a “becoming-for-others” in the Levinasian ethical sense.

For example, Bataille’s language in the following passages from *Inner Experience* is charged such sacrificial energy, and his prose, like much improvisation, performs what it makes explicit:

Now to live signifies for you not only the flux and fleeting play of light which are united in you, but the passage of warmth or light from one being to another, from you to your fellow being or from your fellow being to you (even at the moment when you read in me the contagion of my fever which reaches you); words, books, monuments, symbols, laughter are only so many paths of this contagion, of this passage.

The force of such a passage shares with good improvisation the insistence of presence that reaches outward from a place that is not interior and personal. This type of improvisation, as a streaming both outward and inward, provides a model in our ethical relationships to others. The materiality of sound as an expressive force is the passage of light from one being to another, from player to player, player to audience. The force of this communicative expression allows the passage of light to emanate along the path of contagion, to become a kind of kindling for the heat of improvisation.

Another barrier to open and dynamic systems of communication, musical or otherwise, is the tendency to submit the unknown to reductive and simplistic categories and concepts. Categorization and conceptualization rob us of the experience of “this-individual-here-and-now,” lived in immediate shared sensuous experience. In this mode of relation, representations of the other, or that which we do not understand, fall immediately within a general type, an a priori idea, or an essence, conceptually located in a greater whole structure or order. This egocentric model ensures a relational system that is fundamentally based on closure, exclusivity, and homogeneity. One way to avoid such trappings is to defer our desire to know or to master the unknown. This is a productive deferral of knowledge since, as Jacques Lacan explains, “when we know something, we are already not conceiving anything any longer.”

So, to take a simple example of how this works, when people hear that something is from the South,

or is Southern, particularly in certain circles, there is a tendency to dismiss it out of hand as quaint, regional, and perhaps even reactionary. To me, this is intellectual and ethical laziness.

The challenge offered to us by the practice of improvisation is to risk knowledge, what we think we know, and to open up to uncertainty—the radical questioning of what we know. Improvisers are attuned to these moments of what theorist Gaytri Spivak calls “productive bafflement,” in which players sustain sonic exploration without the goal of any final mastery. Their interactions make us acutely aware of the tension between uncertainty and certainty, the self and others, the known and unknown, and what we might do in the face of this risk. Improvisation as practice functions as a mode of inquiry that seems both self-shattering and affirmative. The transformative potential of such a space relies on the players’ ability to tap into these libidinal forces and flows not fettered by precepts or prescriptive dogmas.

One interesting example of this transformative potential is the synthesist Dennis Palmer’s on-going collaboration with Colonel Bruce Hampton, the South’s noted avant guitar jam band figure-head and legend. Originally, in 1999, Dennis went on tour with Col. Bruce, playing to crowds of jam band enthusiasts, a cross-over that was unprecedented and often to the surprise of the legions of Phish fans at area festivals. Col. Bruce would often make space in the set for Dennis to improvise rather than just “jam”, and the reactions from the audience were always mixed, ranging from praise to bafflement. Hampton wanted to expose them to more “out music,” he would say--to challenge them with new sonic possibilities. Another example resulting from the same collaboration is Col. Hampton's new solo record, *Songs of the Solar Ping*, in which during improvised pieces with Dennis, he is clearly pushing in new expressive and free directions.

Ethics and the Expressive Possibilities of Place

One time the Shaking Ray Levis were playing at the Tin Pan Alley in New York and a highly respected fellow improviser advised them, “Now Boys, don’t go playing that hillbilly hoak-um stuff—they don’t like that up there.” Essentially, they were being asked to repress their difference from the other improvisers in the service of a closed system, which is counter to the goals of improvisation as lived practice. Counter to such reductive assumptions, improvisation offers us as a way of re-thinking terms of communication so often grounded in an ego-centrism based on the often violent repression of difference and alterity—or otherness. This type of repression can occur at an aesthetic, cultural, or material level and belies a fundamental lack of empathetic imagination. Empathy, or empathetic practice, takes an act of will and imagination, which opens up to another’s heart, if you will—whereas emotions like pity or sympathy, laudable as they may be, don’t require much—they aren’t necessarily transformative emotions, they are more passive than the active practice of empathy.

Our sense of self is, in essence, a co-creation with the public sphere, ideally, a playful improvisation with others. This is not simply about “discovering an authentic voice,” and then “finding common ground” with other players, but rather a preservation and even celebration of our radical

incommensurability. As Derek Bailey explains, he looks forward to the moments when “you are taken out of yourself”—when players introduce something that so “disorients you that, for a time, which might even last a second or two, your reactions and responses are not what they normally would be.” He goes on to explain, “You can do something you didn’t realize you were capable of . . . [an example] might be the production by some member of the group of something so apt or so inappropriate that it momentarily overwhelms your sensibility—and the results of this type of thing are literally incalculable” .

One of the incalculable results of this dynamic is that it reveals how an alien otherness inhabits our most intimate inwardness—and it takes a de-centering or disorienting of self to move into a new field of relations, an empathetic extension out of the comfortable boundaries of habit. This empathetic extension is most concretely revealed in the practice of musical improvisation, which takes creative imagination and will, a real opening up to a back and forth between these interior and exterior dimensions of the self in acts of co-creation with others, including the physical space we inhabit. The possibilities of such collaboration are unexpected, dynamic, and arresting—for one example, the Shaking Ray Levis’ collaborations with New York performer Shelley Hirsch, the avant-garde vocalist and performance artist. Her work encompasses story telling pieces, staged performances, compositions, improvisations, collaborations, and installations. At a recent show in the folk-art gallery Winder Binder, in Chattanooga, TN depicted in Figure X, Hirsch and the Shaking Ray Levis performed, resulting in a tapestry of “vocal-tellings” from both Hirsch and Palmer about their experience of Southern culture against the backdrop of D. Palmer and B. Stagner’s distinctive Southern improviser stylings. Palmer effectively describes such vocal tellings in a recent interview with *Roulette*:

Shelley is the damnedest best vocalist you’ll ever hear, and she is on the beam at what folks in the Ol’ Time Avant Garde call “Vocal-Tellin’” ~ Vocal-Tellin’ is ah! weaving of singing sounds that conjure up stories from a variety of real and mythical cultures. It’s always ah! real high time when we perform with her, she’s fantastic at creating space – where we “whoop it up” with a heart-felt dose of percussion, hollering & Moog synthesizer playing.

This type of play is heavily context-bound, and the aesthetics of place helps us to think of such relationships in topographical terms—locations, spaces, territory, places, because we co-create with our surroundings all the time. Although at first pass it seems contradictory to insist that a communicative or performative style grounded in a radical specificity of place in fact embraces cultural and existential difference. But groups like the Shaking Ray Levi provide a counter to homogeneous “geographies of nowhere” and the politics of dislocation. For example, I’ve heard Southern improvisers such as Davey Williams, LaDonna Smith, Bob Stagner and Dennis Palmer speak repeatedly about how the sonic interplay of specific birds of the region—the catbird, the mockingbird, the chickadee—has deeply influenced them. Dennis Palmer’s vocal style is distinctly resonant with fire and brimstone preachers of the Southern Baptist preachers he grew up with. And, of course, the baying of hillbilly hound-dogs and banjoes echoing through the Appalachians.

This type of geographical authenticity does not foreclose an openness to difference—rather, it

articulates and plays with the potential of expressive forms. It is a highly evolved form of creative play with specific cultural elements, along the lines Stephen Nachmanovitch explains in *Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts*:

In play we manifest fresh, interactive ways of relating with *people, animals, things, ideas, images, ourselves*. It flies in the face of social hierarchies. We toss together elements that were formerly separate. Our actions take on novel sequences. To play is to free ourselves from arbitrary restrictions and expand our field of action.” [italics mine]

I’m concerned that writing off of a particular type of expression as somehow reactionary because it is influenced by locality and an aesthetics of place would lead to the erasure of difference, and not the openness to difference as an ethical and aesthetic imperative.

Derek Bailey explains that for both idiomatic and free improvisers, the main concern is authenticity. For the idiomatic player, authenticity in terms of his relationship to his idiom; for the free improviser, the lack of a stylistic tradition with which to identify opens up the “possibility to develop and maintain a personal authenticity. To find and work with a clearly defined personal identity”. And, I would argue, to find and work with an authenticity of place as sensibility.

And yet, in the current climate, and even more so, the paradox is that the more we globalize, the more homogenous and less distinct or “authentic” our relationships seem to become. And this problem with homogenization, musical or existential, directly impedes our ability to become empathetic, to develop an ethical system of relating to the other, as difficult and demanding of our will as it may be. I’m interested in how particular ways of being are valued at the expense of other ways of being and also how attention to the dynamics in the practice of improvisation might help to forge a sense of character in which the ethics of self-care is linked to the care of community.

The Shaking Ray Levi Society has actualized the link between self-care and care of community in their many outreach educational programs with kids. Since 1986, they have worked with local schools, hospitals, and recreation centers in disadvantaged areas, teaching improvisational workshops, such as “The Shaking Ray Drum Work-Out” shown in Figure and most recently; they have also begun to include Moog synthesizers in their curriculum as shown in Figure. In these workshops, the students not only learn their own expressive possibilities in an environment of trust and co-creation but also the very concrete values of free play.

Nachmanovitch explains the evolutionary value of such play:

. . . play fosters richness of response and adaptive flexibility. This is the evolutionary value of play—play makes us flexible. By reinterpreting reality and begetting novelty, we keep from becoming rigid. Play enables us to rearrange our capacities and our very identity so that they can be used in unforeseen ways. []

Some of these unforeseen ways are to help students become less rigid and inflexible when dealing with their own and others’ expressive possibilities, a model of relationship that will hopefully extend beyond the improvisational moment and into their dealings with others as adults.

Since the demand and obligation of globalization is to find ways of being with others without doing violence to them, it seems that improvisation’s dedication to the free play of non-egotistical desire, expression and pleasure resonates nicely with such aims. I’d like to figure out what we need to retain and what precepts need to be shattered in the service of this desire for free play. When we are

challenged by new concepts—such as having unlikely combinations of players, doing festivals in odd places such as Chattanooga, Tennessee rather than, say, Atlanta or New York, or playing with the notion of an “Old Timey Avant Garde,” we take the risk of discomfort. And the value of such a challenge is to acknowledge the multiplicities of existence and the playful excess barred from closed systems—in language and in musical idioms. This play, as Nachmanovitch tell us, “. . . fosters richness of response and adaptive flexibility. This is the evolutionary value of play—play makes us flexible. By reinterpreting reality and begetting novelty, we keep from becoming rigid. Play enables us to rearrange our capacities and our very identity so they can be used in unforeseen ways . . .”

[]. The beauty of such unforeseen ways of relating to difference is evident in any successful improvisation, in which the players are openly listening and relating to others, and to the other within.

The work of the Shaking Ray Levi Society in building a strong improvisational community in the South seems at first glance “improbable and absurd.”

They have really blazed a trail by bringing folks like Anthony Braxton, Derek Bailey, Min Tanaka, John Zorn, Fred Frith, to an unlikely place like Chattanooga, TN, a region characterized by tradition and stasis. Yet surprisingly, they have had to work the hardest against reductive, rigid, unimaginative and really just lazy stereotypes about Southerners that deny the South’s emergent and strikingly original creativity.

There is a surprising resistance to those who challenge these stereotypes. It seems folks want to put their work in some Southern ghetto—to ghettoize, if you will, this amazingly varied and rich organization. Reactions run something like—oh, the Shaking Rays—those hillbilly improvisers, I’ve seen them once, I know their shtick, it’s very homely, quaint and regional. But they’ve also gotten another, almost opposite reaction--oh, those guys, they think they are avant-garde, what pretentious assholes.

The reactions indicate a clear double-bind playfully referenced in the concept of “Old-Timey Avant Garde in the New South.” Rigid stereotypes about the South prevent many audiences and players from thinking cease productively about the work done here. As the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan tells us, “When you think you know something, you cease to think about it at all” [].

For example—to think you already know everything about improvisation, the avant-garde as a critical concept, or Southern culture, might mean that you aren’t open to the work of an organization like the Shaking Ray Levi Society. It happens all the time when cultural stereotypes overshadow the work itself. Playful use of terms and sensibilities like Old Timey Avant Garde and the New South are ironic contradictions that simultaneously complicate, ridicule, preserve and transform rigid and unimaginative beliefs. The problems with reception I’m outlining here are by no means unique, and are illustrative of the problems already raised—namely, the egocentric tendency to reduce others to simplistic categories, forgoing the multiplicity of possibilities and play that such odd, improbable, and absurd concepts can open us up to.

As a fan and long-time observer of the Shaking Ray’s work, I applaud the deeply ethical and aesthetically valuable work they’ve done in such a climate. I hope their work will inspire others trying

to establish such communities against difficult odds because in the current climate the paradox is that the more we globalize, the more homogenous we seem to become. And this problem with homogenization, musical or existential, directly impedes our ability to become empathetic, to develop an ethical system of relating to the other, as difficult and demanding of our will as it may be.

Time and again, witnessing successful interactions among players improvising, I see restrictive codes being shattered in service of this desire for this type of ethical free play. Derek Bailey also explains that the aims of such liberatory goals of improvisation are not concerned with assessing if a piece of music was “good.” A more critical objective is “raising the improvisation to a level where all players are involved equally and inextricably in the music-making act. And the achievement of this experience is always seen as a liberation” [1].

What, then, is being liberated in such a project? Derek goes on to explain that the practice of freedom for the improviser is directly linked to the willingness to change identity. For him, the freedom of improvisation confers benefits but also requires what he calls “a very demanding allegiance.” Further, the free improvisation position infers that whatever the commitment to the music played or to his own personal style, there is a higher commitment, which is to follow the implications of free improvisation. Derek explains that for the free improviser everything, including his music, must serve his freedom:

"And it is in his commitment to the maintenance of his freedom, which very often entails a sacrifice of, or a change in, his musical identity (his ‘idiom’ in fact) that the free improviser finds his authenticity. Authenticity in free playing is to be committed to the evolutionary or developmental implications of improvisation."

This type of authenticity does not close in on itself egocentrically, rather, it is placed in the service of the ethical implications of improvisation.

Improvisation as such an ethical model of communication offers us a dynamic system by providing a space to explore what the ethics scholar Emmanuel Levinas calls our “mutual lived immanence”—an empathetic extension of self in emergent moments of inter-subjective relations. Immanence means both an interiority/existence within and exteriority/being extending into all parts of the universe. And there are apparently at least three major definitions of Inter-subjectivity: 1) "a consensual validation between independent subjects via exchange of signals." 2) "a mutual engagement and participation between independent subjects, which conditions their respective experience," and 3) the one I think is most productive, “a mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects also communications and relations on both intra and inter subjective levels.”

Clearly, as I think we are all aware, our current global cultural climate poses obligations, demands, and risks so similar to the obligations, demands, and risks players experience in the improvisational moment: to live with and for difference, to put our comfortable sense of self on the line . . . to preserve and sustain diversity, and also to recognize interdependence, common interests, and what unites us as a global community, as players. Levinas also proposes an “ethics of Alterity,” which denotes the radical difference of the Other (cultural other, other players) which resists being subsumed

to the same—conceptually, musically, relationally.

Levinas seeks an ethic of relationship in the space between self and other that insists on difference. Along these lines, I'm interested in exploring how improvisation can offer an antidote to the negative effects of globalization and geographies of nowhere. Improvisation in practice is simultaneously ethically open *and* radically local by insisting on relationality and uniqueness. The uniqueness of individual players is not erased in service of idealized universality that runs the risk of homogeneity, but rather an insistence on specificity of style that arises from politics of space, geography and culture. For example, the Shaking Rays are distinctly Southern, but Southern culture is a filter through which expressive forces flow revealing roots in a still strong oral culture of storytelling and revivals, speaking in tongues. The authenticity of such distinct flavor doesn't foreclose the possibilities for collaboration with others, but rather opens them up. Distinct cultural features are a filter of sorts, but not the ultimate ground that limits possibilities for expression in new dimensions.

It is helpful to examine how this functions in a specific recording: take, for example, the 2005 *The Gospel Record: Reference Edition*, recorded with Derek Bailey, Amy Denio, and Dennis Palmer in 1999, a 14 minute release of seven traditional Southern white gospel songs and Derek's improvisation. Because it challenged conceptual expectations of such a genre, many critics and fans were unsure how to interpret it: was it an ironic joke? a homage? a subversive satire?

For example, *Pitchfork* gives us this read of the recording:

Sometimes, the interpretations border on the surreal, though I'm more taken with the whirlwind pace: all of these songs are crammed into just over 14 minutes. The trio ends *The Gospel Record* with a rare moment of tenderness during the final phrase of "I'm Bound for the Land of Canaan", I'm reminded of the traveling sideshows that went through the American South 100 years ago, featuring all manner of decidedly non-sacred entertainments only to close with a group hymn before skipping town. If Bailey, Denio and Palmer have subversive aims, this music succeeds in spite of itself. Hardly irreverent, this is old time religion full made interesting and with more vitality than you can, er, shake a stick at. []

Largely ignored because it was so anomalous, most critics were just baffled because there isn't a conceptual or aesthetic precedent that it fits; many seemed suspicious it was a joke or worse, something serious. So it is radical in ways that challenge, frustrate, and invite us to commune with difference and the improbable and absurd.

I think free improvisation as a model of interaction and relation to difference speaks worlds to an ideal of sustaining and preserving difference without overcoming it. Derek Bailey has this to say about communing with difference, and I'd like to end with it here as an honor to his memory and, perhaps, as a call to action:

There has to be some degree, not just of unfamiliarity, but also a fundamental incompatibility with a partner. Otherwise, what are you improvising for? What are you improvising with or around? You've got to find somewhere you can work. If there are no difficulties, it seems to

me that there is pretty much no point in playing. I find that the things that excite me are the trying to make something work. And when it does work, it is the most fantastic thing. Maybe the most obvious analogy would be the grit that produces the pearl in an oyster. Or some shit like that.

So, I ask, let's be responsible for playing with the other in "some shit like that," playing with the things that challenge us and frustrate our expectations. This respect for difference and interdependence, the creative extension of intention in empathy and deep listening is, again, quite the act of will—a relational field of play that is, like any good conversation, musical or otherwise, messy, vibrant, sometimes noisy, and yes, often improbable and absurd.

-Heather Palmer



In Memory of the great Dennis Palmer, Chattanooga fellow improviser, barnstormer, regional leader

References and Notes

Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (Great Britain: Moorland Publishing in association with Incus Records, 1980).

Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, Trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988).

Jacques Derrida. "At this Moment in this Very Work Here I Am."

A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds. Peggy Kamuf, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

"Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas." *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978: 79-195.

James Howard Kunstler. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscape*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

Stephen Nachmanovitch, *Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher Inc, 1990).

www.shakingray.com

<http://www.colbruce.com>

<http://roulettenyc.wordpress.com/2009/11/23/interview-with-the-shaking-ray-levis/>

Lacan on knowledge _____. 1991. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, trans. Jacques Alain Miller. New York: W. W. and Company.

IN HONOR OF BILL DIXON

by Eric Zinman

Jason Zappa, Nick Scrowackzewski and I convened a small orchestra in Boston to honor Bill Dixon and his contribution. The orchestra was composed of former students like myself and Jason as well as players on the Boston scene. Stephen Haynes came up from CT and drove Bill from Vermont.

I transcribed the following lecture which was then edited by Jason Zappa.

2010

"One of the errors that stays with this music is that 'if you just wait the music is going to construct itself and you will have done nothing'

The difference between this music and the other area of music has to do with the responsibility for the erection of the piece of music is 100% on the shoulders of each player. When someone writes a piece of music, the responsibilities for detailing what each of you need to know to make it into a cohesive whole is on the person who writes the music. So for many years you don't pay it any attention and then a sliver of light "freedom!"... and people say: "oh freedom! we don't need to do this!" and still you don't pay it any attention.

There is just as much discipline (with) as many rules and variables as a piece of music you sit down and construct as it is happening as is in a piece that someone else does. So your responsibilities as players are the same.

What does your instrument do in the texture?

What doesn't it do when someone else is doing something?

When should you play unison?

When does this need to be reinforced?

When should someone have a line and cut through and waken the thing up?

When should you be lethargic and just let the sound of the room dictate the aura that you are supposed to be addressing?

But you have to pay attention and you have to MEAN IT! I didn't hear any meaning--its like fucking a dead whore. No one gets anything from that so you have to make believe--make believe you are doing music, and all of the things that go into a piece of music will become a part of your vocabulary.

When should you reinforce?

When should you play in unison with someone?

When should you try and build a line?

When should you do counterlines?

When should you be in your upper register?

When should you make a noise or something because things have become too pure?

All these things.

And you answer these with your playing. Now [there is] one rule that will guide you and that is no matter how many players are in the room, you should be able to hear distinctly what each player is doing. That gives you your level of balance. You don't need a conductor--your ear is dictating to you.

The other thing is, what about the sameness of sound?

Play a concert C

(musicians play)

you have to hear it in your mind and when you play it that's what comes up. You can't puff and hope that it will happen. Instruments are cruel and insensitive things when you entrust them with too much responsibility, see? And you learn that very early. Alright.

Play a concert C but before you play and everybody play it at the same time and not too loud and not too soft but to establish a sound. Alright go ahead.

(musicians play)

STOP. Alright. Now you've got to find some way of communicating so the best way of doing it is to make yourself circular. There's a reason why people play in a circle--so everyone can see everyone--and you can see when that person is going to take a breath and you're guided by that--and you have to

play that note as if you are not going to get another chance to play that note. See--that's what it is.

Alright, hold that tone as long as you can. When it sounds like one sound, you are in tune with the sound

As long as there are these other things, you are not in tune with the sound

And you may very well not want to be in tune with the sound but what you play should be played because that's what you want and it's not what you get that you are satisfied with.

Alright now [here's] what you should do--and this is an old thing:

Establish a sound. Then we have 3 notes that you can go up from that sound, and 3 notes that you can go down from that sound, arbitrarily and no one should play that in unison:

2, 3, 4 and play

(Musicians play)

Every sound has its initiation, its gestation period and its establishment.

A sound is a sound, not something to help you get to the other one, so when you hear the players, you think are doing something that you really favor. Whether they think of this, or have thought of this, whether they have studied it or not studied it--this is what they are doing. What would you rather do--play any sound that you want or would you rather name the sound that someone else plays? Which would you rather do? I would rather play the sound because if I to know the name of the sound I would ask a person. So intellectual discourse has no place in music performance.

(Musicians play)

See how beautiful that sounded? [That's] because it can't be measured. Now if I told you to play each sound 2 beats it becomes arithmetical and that's the way you learn music anyway--but that's not what you say you want to do. You want to create music...don't you?

So how do you think it's created? Someone has to stand out there, make all the mistakes, everyone else learn them and then you come along, diligent students that you are and you learn how to do that--but you've gotta have the feeling.

I personally don't believe everyone can do everything. I don't think a person can run a 3 minute mile, climb mount Everest, knock out Muhammad Ali, Swim 100 yards in 3 seconds...I don't believe a person can do everything. But the thing that you do we hold you responsible for.

A HA! Your whole personal stance, how you hold the instrument, how you are dressed-- all of those things have something to do with what is going to come out of your instrument which originates in your brain and is coursed through your body. That's what makes us pay attention.

The rest of it is bullshit.

So one decides what one wants to do. Alright, so with that as a guideline. Lets play something for six minutes no more. Decide whether its going to be six minutes of solo playing, decide whether its going to be an ensemble thing making an ensemble statement, decide how many octaves you're going to use on the instrument because don't forget you have all of that.

You understand what I mean?

Ok play something for six minutes and make it concise.

2,3,4 and...

(musicians play)

We can't discriminate against sound. All sounds are beautiful. Some collections are more effective and please us aesthetically more than others. So there were some points there that sounded really quite beautiful. There were some things that happened in that span that no one could have done the way you did them--because you have to understand that when you play well, no one can do it as well as you. If you play badly, there is no one who could play it as badly as you--so there's always this individual thing—you understand what I mean--and what we do is we emulate the players we think are playing well and we try to say that we're being creative.

That's not true.

You're not even being re-creative--you're being nothing because its already been done by someone else and you're trying to jump in on that. More power to you [but] it's impossible--[it] can't happen.

But if you have a problem, you can't forget all the things that preceded what you're doing now. If you have to write something down to form a unified 'something' out of which you can come that's what you should do. Don't think that because another direction happens to surface in music that it gets rid of all of the stuff that preceded that--its added. It's given you something else because there are some things, for example some things cannot be written down...so that you can...well lets put it this way: nothing can be done twice.

We try to do it as much as we can. It can't be done twice because the first time you do it you're a certain age, you're this, you're that your body, the world is spinning a different way and all like that so if everything stayed the same, you could do it twice.

[It] doesn't stay the same, you can't do it twice, but you want to repeat that because there is something about it you want--so you work at trying to remember what the feeling was, what the sound was, how the instrument felt in your hand blah blah blah and that's what you do....

But you can't make music that way--you can't create music. To create music you gotta come up with a whole other thing. Someone punches someone in the mouth and he doesn't say "OW!" he says "Gee! do that again" that's creative. You want to imitate? My god he got punched in the mouth and he enjoyed it for gods sake.

Doing music and the people around you who are doing music are the most important people you can have because they are the one's that are going to teach you--the one's that you play with--not the ones you listen to on CD, the one that you play with, see? So try to understand what they are doing when they are taking a breath, what kind of sound they make or how you can compliment that sound. Can you get inside that sound and do something? Can you do it? AH--how do you then take one note and make it seem to imply three or four notes? You see? How do you do that?

So if you have nothing else to practice, these are the things to think about and work at in addition to the academic things that are still important on the horn.

A scale is still a scale and still has to be played as a scale.

A line which is a scale has to be played as a line.

A melody has to be played as a melody.

So all of these things when you break it down, everything is reduced to a cipher. You've got to decide what part of it at a certain time your dealing with.

Now one of the problems...you're going to do something tomorrow, because tonight you should be trying to grease the wheels--like, get rid of a lot of the dumb stuff, you know, and tomorrow what you should do when you give your performance [is] you have to play every note that you play as if it was the last thing you were going to do on the face of this Earth. And that it's also possible that if you do it right that it can change things--and that is not mere folly--you have to believe and you can't wait until someone gives you a four star review in Downbeat before you believe in yourself. You have to believe if no one else does. I'm doing this--you have to critique yourself. Someone says "Oh my God man it was beautiful what you played" and you know half of it was and you thank them, be generous, but then go back and say "if this is what I'm doing I better be doing something else...because I'm not doing what I think I'm doing."

Music, creative music, improvised music--whatever you're going to call it requires a basic kind of honesty. YOU have to know when you've done it because you're the only one who knows because you've done it. You might play and someone says "my that was really something" and you barely got by in your playing by the skin of your teeth. Everyone of us has had that.

You played well at a party, concert or whatever it is or something and no one heard it, they were talking, The better you played the more they talked and then there--sometimes at a performance where you played, you just barely limped along and everyone was "gee wow man this guy is greater than Miles...man he's sittin' here...Oh 'Trane better watch out"

So its you. [You] gotta be honest with yourself.

Now a good way to approach that is, like, I know as long as I've been playing--and I've been playing a long time--every single day I find out something about the trumpet that I didn't know the day before, so some people say you're smarter.

"Oh I thought you couldn't play"--well that's their problem. I'm hunting for information that's what I want. I want to be able to play effectively what I want to play. I want to be in charge and if no one likes it, that's their problem

So your audience is your enemy, see? This is a private thing--you decided you wanted to play this music this way. No one forced you--in fact if you're not remiss and you're hip, they did everything they could to see that you couldn't learn how to play. So if you do anything well its not because of them its in spite of them. Remember that.

And there'll be times in your playing when you finish you're playing. You're doing a performance or something like that. There's a very good feeling that comes out of when you play well. Maybe money won't happen. Your next job you may get five dollars more, but there's something about playing well in music. I don't even think sex equals that. I don't, but I'm older—you guys are still young, bucking around stuff--but be honest with yourself, because you can't get anywhere as a creative musician if you are dishonest...you just can't.

Know when you need to work on certain things, Know when you are not identifying pitches properly. Know when if there is D flat situation and you're playing a D because you haven't sat down today, **KNOW THAT--THAT'S YOUR INFORMATION.** That's your information, see? and **LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN**

In the ensemble you may start to play something and this other person has already started to play that. You don't need to play that, so you have to find a way to get out of that and start another situation. See what I mean? That's your orchestration. When you have someone write for you they write it. Don't forget if you have ten players, ten players are writers. Keep that in mind. The pleasure in this music is...they equal the horrors and the disappointments--but just a little bit. They make you want to continue. You have to do that.

Now, you can't neglect academic practice of your instrument. If you don't know your instrument, your intervals, and you think you can play everything chromatically you're deceiving yourself in playing. If all of a sudden harsh sounds are in vogue, it doesn't...what we ascribe to music, it doesn't rule out beautiful sounds. There's something, I mean, you can be playing all of this stuff and all of a sudden there's this...someone can be playing a simple, beautiful academic melody. Well if it fits, fine, because

sometimes that's what, I mean, you know everything isn't a thirteenth chord. Triads--when I was studying the rule was when you get into trouble, go back to your triads because they contain everything. You understand what I mean? So with that as a thing, make small examples, like, do an orchestra piece that has an introduction, whatever an orchestra piece has, and do it in ninety seconds--Things like that, and see if you can make it sound like it had a beginning, middle and end...you know what I mean.

And things like that and do things where, if you can, start like in the middle of a piece of music--which is what most people do anyway; they think they're at the beginning and they've really started in the middle. You can hear it because the more comfortable they become, then they begin—they work themselves up to the beginning and back again

So give yourself little examples of things like that. Don't just play openly to see how long you can play. Don't do that. Start off to see...have someone play and see if everyone can learn to play in unison with that person who's playing. These are exercises--good for your ear, good for your facility, certainly good for your knowledge.

You understand me?

Doing duets: Duets are easier than trio's for one reason--two people can get along better than three or whatever. I don't make the rules--that's what they do, because that's what the hell it is, right? The more people you have, there's a kind of, um, "what about me? what about me? what about me?"

They may do a piece or part where your horn isn't required. That's being honest in the music. You understand what I mean? So know where you belong architecturally and instrumentally and try these things out and when they don't work, learn to critique yourself without feeling attacked and without being defensive.

When would I say "hey man, you're out of tune..."

"Well your mother's out of tune..."

You want to be gregarious about wanting the information because knowledge in that instance IS power.

Well why don't you just take a unison--do this for about 90 seconds...and here's why don't you play a unison--this is very difficult. You'll start off, and as I'm talking to you now, everyone should be thinking of the note that the unison is going to be. This is how intuition...everyone talks about intuition--intuition is invisible as a thing, it only exists in our imagination and when we hear it, OK. So I'm going to tell you to play for ninety seconds and I'm just going to give you the thing, the downbeat to play, I'm not going to tell you what note and you're going to try to do it in

unison. You do that for six months you'd be amazed at what the group is supposed to sound like...

(a small sound is heard)...

Now who did that? Why did you do that? No tell the truth why did you do that?

Student: "when I started playing the horn I had difficulty figuring out where I was. I was so used to playing the piano."

Well that doesn't help the situation. You understand what I mean? That's cheating in a way. If you want to cheat all your life its not going to bother me but its going to bother them and they should chew your ass about it.

Alright I'll give you four and then you, I mean, do it moderately so we can hear the overtones

1 2 3 4 and...

(Musicians play)

Now that wasn't bad. That wasn't bad at all, but you learn so you can almost hear what the musicians are thinking especially after you've played together for a while.

Reading: you know, there is an old story--music of the future, music of the future, we're going to be so advanced that the composer will come in and sit down, he'll face the audience. The composer will sit down and he'll face them and they'll look at each other and for three hours they will just face each other and then when the three hours are up they'll applaud--you know why? They will have read each others minds and they will read in his mind what they want to play--and so you know if they can get that, why waste time trying to write it down and have them interpret what they want to play?

Now, you may think that's impossible but it's not impossible. The mind sends out vibrations--it's up to you to catch it, and this is simple. We're all on the same wavelength [in] this is music. If you play together for a month and you come in and you do that exercise after one or two times you should be able to do it anytime you want because you've already circulated what you think and how you think if people are paying attention.

Now in that instance the saxophone player was the strongest voice but there was a point for six or seven seconds [where] there was a beautiful sound--it just had to happen very briefly--a beautiful sound and if I were playing, I would have wanted that sound to stay, and then when you couldn't stand it anymore, then someone just shriek a line through that dog gone sound

I'll tell you a story. I have a piece of music called Shrike and I was in Vienna and I met...what the hell was his name...(student reminds him—Luigi Nono) HA! who? (student says Nono) Nono--Luigi Nono, yah I met Nono--a tall man. They were having a composers conference and the people I was with had given him a copy of the record. He's a tall man so he picked me up and he's holding me off the ground and he says "come we must go to my villa and we must spend time there and you must show me how you do these things so I can write a piece for you"

And I said but Mr Nono I couldn't play it if you wrote it. It wasn't conceived that way and he just looked at me wondering if I was holding something back. Everything can't be written in the way that you want it so...alright, Ok, try it again

2 3 4 and...OH, but this time whatever you play..play it a half tone higher

2 3 4 and

(musicians play)

Ok, now the other thing is learning how when one person runs out of breath, so that when one person is leaving a note, you attack your note on the high point of his leaving his note, so we don't hear a break. You learn how to do that in an ensemble too see because everything isn't a whole note or half note or something like that. These are the things you can do instead of wasting your time thinking your doing something. Learn the things that go into making music so that when you're lucky (snaps) you can do music.

Alright, get it. Here we are again. One more time..

2 3...now do it a half tone lower

2 3 4 and..

(musicians play)

OK. Alright. Now it's the last one and then you're going to take all four of those and put them together. Alright this is the last one. I want you to start of on a C sharp--your version of a C sharp. You know you gotta have it in your mind. And start pretty strongly, and hold it, and then bring it down so that its almost a whisper

OK 2 3 4 and

(musicians play)

Now all of you could stand some time in the gym too!

alright.....take those four things that you have: the first note, then a half tone lower and then a half tone lower than that, or then a half tone higher, and then this last one make a piece of music that lasts a minute. Out of it I want two soloists...I want three soloists. I want Jason, I want the alto, and I want ah...ah...what's his name, Forbes. At various [points] you'll take a solo. You'll make it relate in terms of the sonority. "

(recording was cut off)

the improviser festival ~

& brief report: "the singing Neanderthals"

by Doug Carroll

2010

Thanks to all of you, especially LaDonna, for making those two weeks in Birmingham some of the happiest times of my life. Meeting with old friends, making new ones, and creating some exquisite art made the trip a fantastic adventure. Plus I got some great recordings at the Zoo--Laughing Cookaburras and the mating calls of Crested Screammers were superb.

I'm reading "The Singing Neanderthals, The Origins of Music, Language, Mind and Body" by Steven Mithen. The book is based on the widely held belief that early human species were able to produce music before they acquired the ability for language. The author cites research from psychology, anthropology, linguistics and musicology. "Baby talk" or a prosodic (musical) manner of speaking to infants is how adults teach them to speak. He states that although there are similarities, music basically communicates emotion and language communicates information.

Evolutionarily speaking, we were able to produce music before language, and language is based on certain aspects of music like rhythm, rise and fall of pitch, varying loudness, etc. I'm thinking language is a particular type of music, informational music, if you will. If that is true, then music, as the root of language, becomes the root of all cultural activities based on language.

But it raises the questions: What is music? Do animals make music? Some say music is only in the domain of humans who possess the intention of creating art, but this is narrow and does not satisfy. I prefer the Cagean approach which acknowledges the potential of any sound being musical. In fact, living creatures need not be involved when music is made--e.g. a babbling brook, the ocean surf, a strong, fresh wind may all be heard as "pure music." This makes what we're doing a type of "human music," a specialized music that involves instruments and voices and uses, or abandons, certain musical traditions. Improvised music goes back to the original source, the communication of emotion. The emotion has meaning. It is something we can feel.

Peace, love, joy,
Doug

the improvisor festival ~ 2010

post mordem what was...what happened...?

2010

the improvisor festival

August 1-30, 2010

Celebrating the 30 year Anniversary

1. I am so happy to have this project completed now. It was a brilliant and productive time for all participating artists and communities, from Birmingham and from around the South, particularly our guest artists in residence from New York, North Carolina, and Florida, and those who made concerts who came from Louisville, Athens, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Nashville, Gainesville, Panama City, Jackson, NYC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. From Huntsville, Birmingham, Montevallo, Montgomery, Florence & Tuscaloosa. From Italy! Birmingham became a very inclusive crossroads for these artists to meet, and co-mingle with an interested audience from our community.
2. We raised awareness, that this music is a form of *cultural recreation*, that modern improvised music is an *indicative cultural folk-form* of our own times, and that it will one day be recognized as much a part of *Alabama Folk Culture* as bluegrass or blues. It is a music which can be made by children, adults, professionals, and amateurs alike. It only requires a deeper attitude of listening and responding. It is not dominated by mainstream commercial interests. It is a musical expression of the people, personal, intimate, much like poetry. It can be manifest in music, spoken word, or dance and movement. It is an artistic attitude of "being in the moment" both as a practitioner and as an observer. It takes concentration, and a willingness to be open to the unknown possibilities and potential that any event can manifest. It can be mundane, artistic, or spiritual. It is becoming a new language between those who create together, and those who observe.

—LaDonna Smith, Director & Producer

Loved it!

The VAST spectrum of sounds combined with the high streaming compression rate and the garbled phone signal gave an alternative experience to all who listened and will listen. An in-depth study of what you are not supposed to need to hear and what gets added. Si's laugh is also an added treat. Listen to it here:
<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/improvisor30thanniversary/2010/08/28/improv-roulette>

Gene Ric, producer
-the improv radio show

Hi La Donna-----Thanks for having us.We also had a great set at your house with Wally and Jill.
Wish you could have joined us.Another time! Best, Ron Heglin

You managed another great fest with style and grace, hope to see you down at my place.
Wonderful, Clifford McPeck

Greetings for Tuesday, and happy September tomorrow. I hope you are recuperating from the fantastic event of the Improv Festival, I have heard and seen nothing but good things. We have such a strong and unique community, everyone talks of that.

It was a wonderful Festival indeed thanks to the Labors of LaDonna and so many others, and from seeing all the e mails, a significant event for all involved, as well as the art of Improvisation! We welcomed new Improv family members and celebrated this art, made deeper and more exciting by the long history many of us have together, the caliber, unique quality, and infinite array of talents we all possess.

It was so great to make art together, and you are on my mind a lot. I was indeed very blue upon leaving B'ham after the show this weekend, afraid I would never see you guys again, but seeing the e mails and the connections made, I now know that we all have more great work to do in the future.

I was very happy to see you all, very blessed by the riches we share, and will miss you all until next time...which I hope is very soon! at voitre service always...

Sincerely,
Deborah Mauldin

Hello there!

Thanks again for such a wonderful month of great performances and magical moments.

It is always a great pleasure to work with you - hopefully I the chance will arise again soon!!!!

Thank you again for everything!!!!

Celeste LaBourde

Annie,

Thank you so much for hosting the opening of the improviser festival! iT'S been amazing down here.. packed houses every night for a month.. and it was so great to launch everything from the Stone in NYC! The line-up was terrific. A wonderful reunion. I'd just love to have some more leisure to catch up with you and Roger sometime. They're talking a series here.. ya'll just gotta come down sometime again soon! Thanks again,

**Love and XOXOXOXo
LaDonna**

Re: THE STONE, Opening Night AUGUST 1

Hi LaDonna,

Likewise, it was wonderful to see you. I was so happy we could open the month that way. We really made an effort to mix up the month - lots of contemporary classical notated stuff, countered with plenty of improv. Crowds at the stone have been much better than usual here too. We got to play with Chris Cochrane, and will play with him yet again. he sounds fantastic.

I'd love to spend more time with you too. But I'm not complaining... it was wonderful to see you for just a few minutes. As you know, this curating thing is exhausting!

Love
Annie Gosfield

EVERYONE ... lovely to have met & worked with you all. I wish I could have come out Saturday night - sorry not to have said "goodbye" to David & Juanita. Unfortunately, my right siatic nerve decided to go into a spasm, so I was rolling around on the floor with pain killers & heating pads etc! - I've never experienced anything quite like it & hope never to again!

Stay in touch
Iuv Claire Elizabeth Barratt

Hey LaDonna,

Thank you again for inviting me to be a part of this event! It was a gas being able to interact with everyone, and I only wish I somehow could have contributed more once I got there. But what's written in my general email below is true: the memory of what we created together has given me something particular and special to carry forward, both in terms of inspiring me toward creating more work, and in regards to my attitude about the value of what I've been and am doing as an (improvising) artist.

So keep in touch...I too look forward to when we'll next see/play with each other [and let people know when you get those gigs in NYC at The Stone or wherever].

Hope the last few Festival events go well!

Much love,
David Appel

Hello all,

Back in NYC...hard to believe I've left behind the whirlwind of great work and play that we all whipped up over the past week and a half.

Thanks to everyone for a most memorable 11 days! It was fantastic to be part of a (momentary) community of folks churning and struggling and moving and grooving and howling our way into and through some sweet sounds and vivacious dancing, figuring it all out as we went along. Which is of course how it works.

At the risk of echoing what a number of others have already said, this was incredibly energizing: to feel like what we do can make a difference on a number of levels--even if seemingly only for an instant or an hour or two (though it really always resonates much longer)--and to feel included as a valued participant and contributor amidst a group of people who are riding their/our lives in these many intriguing and intersecting directions. THANK YOU. What was generated out of this time will for sure carry me on in more than a few ways as summer shifts into fall.

And another shout-out to LaDonna for conspiring to bring us together and orchestrating our various communions. Most excellent, LaD!

So don't be strangers, y'all. Looking forward to meeting up again in whatever context as we mosey on down the road.

Yours,

David

P.S.--And to quote one of the wise ones..."Yabba-dabba-doo!"

Thanks David,

Your participation with us was very special. I appreciate your commitment from the very

beginning, to come down here, and stake residency in this wonderful month long of the improviser's crossroads. Surely, we'll see each other and play again soon. - L.S.

Thanks to all of you, especially LaDonna, for making those two weeks in Birmingham some of the happiest times of my life. Meeting with old friends, making new ones, and creating some exquisite art made the trip a fantastic adventure. Plus I got some great recordings at the Zoo--Laughing Cookaburras and the mating calls of Crested Screamers were superb.

-Doug Carroll (see article)

Hi, Everyone,

Thanks for a wonderful 4 days, and to all who contributed work -- artistic, administrative, technical, and janitorial. We went through a lot together. My experiences and the community you all form are very dear to me. I feel inspired, exhausted, grateful to have been included, and more committed to art and what it represents to the world -- fresh thinking, desperately needed.

I am wondering how Laura is, Sycamore. I hope she is moved by all the written notes, etc.

and speaking of moved, here's to the movement.

In solidarity,

Susan

The Improvisor Festival 2010 was like being on revolving carousel of celebration under a sky of shooting stars. Each event was generously presented to varying degrees of improvisation that challenged the parameters of creative expression, in personal and shared ways. The performances were exceptional and inspired, as were the audience members attending. Difficult listening, weirdly kinetic, provocatively curious, engaging beginner's mind. Overall, a deeply healing experience for me.

With love and much appreciation for all the musicians, dancers, vocalists, poets, healers who embraced tenderness within the indescribable, moment by moment.

Especially in awe of LaDonna Smith, Lee Shook and all those who were also behind the scenes producing and supporting.

Neko Linda

9-1-10

ROCKS IN THE SEA

Eric Zinman

Mario Rechtern

2010

These are the liner notes for my upcoming release 2010 for CJR records. This essay is a true joint effort between Mario Rechtern and myself. Some aspects are like conversations we've had and our reflections on the musicians with whom we work including actual descriptions of the music. Benjamin talked quite passionately about the Argonauts and their fear of the music of the sirens. Defamation of beauty is the underlying subject. I hope you will understand



ROCKS IN THE SEA

Mario Rechtern reeds
Eric Zinman piano
Didier Lasserre drums
Benjamin Duboc bass
Recorded in Paris, May 2009

"Rocks in the Sea" is like the classic stories we dream about: Jason and the Argonauts, Iliad, The Odyssey, Ovid's Metamorphosis etc.... There is no battle field, no competition.....only enthusiasm for our shared appetite and journey together.

There is an aspect of Benjamin and why Mario initially called him the 'rock in the sea', not all of us. He has this very firm way of making statements about anything that he

says concerning his emotions or emotion evolved plans/projects, that does not allow contradiction or doubt.

Benjamin agreed and upon hearing the music he insisted it is "ROCKS in the SEA".

To some neither seems desirable.....neither the argonauts, who are led by Jason on a bootless journey, nor the sirens.....but if this "rocks in the sea" refers to our conviction and the way we yield and wield our interactive force by being clear in what we play and feeling the weight in the ocean as it moves around us then maybe I understand.

The sirens are a song that we hear after which we're never the same again. That's the way evolution goes and some people are damned afraid of growing If the sirens are a consuming aspect of our desires as men are led to their death by this attraction, then like all journeys and investigations we develop strength and strategies against that which consumes us, filling us with more substance and weight of character in the struggles of life.

Men fear matriarchal power, perhaps this was the divide in civilization between the southern and northern Mediterranean."more sex than man can handle"is exactly the term written on patriarchal flags against matriarch powers embodied in the sirens and many nymphs, but can women handle this surplus of sexual power that they have?

Some describe the bodies of the sirens as faces of women with bodies of monsters with the bones of their prey at their feet while others describe the sirens as birds of paradise who sing with astonishing beauty and attraction. What is one's gold can be another's poison.The idea that when Orpheus sang his poetry, the trees and rocks bent and gathered closer to hear himshows that poetry once yielded great power.

That's where I want to go to.-- poetry has so much power that it can neutralize them fears about unknown powers of sexual sovereignty within these so called "scary" archaic women and neutralize means to give them a direction versus better and more subtle communication: the trees and rocks gathered closer to hear him!

That's what I call cooperation. And if the rocks gather closer it is rocks that open up. We musicians try to ply what is inside the rocks , not their outside shape. We try to get into the things and people. Inside the sirens are human as everyone else.

This fear of sirens by the Jason Argonauts has a racial and xenophobic quality: to trash them as bad and ugly and dangerous, what is unknown, strange and powerful and liquify it,"seduced by sirens or Circe or other nymphs to more sex than men can handle....."

These men might have been led to the need to control the sexual power of these archaic mythological female figures and their own paranoiac phantasms about womanhood of ancient matriarch systems reaching into the Mediterranean world having parted on the trip to patriarch modernity of the Iliad,the Odyssey and the whole Mediterranean ancient Greek colourful half god heroes mythology (half gods-legends like Hercules etc).

And this incredible poetic output of these times which came to an end with the written text, originally only narrations traded from mouth to mouth, stand for,.....

Well it is not even that scary, as the "poor male" overwhelmed with so much sex he cannot handle, puts them to trash--these women-- to ugliness and insatiability: there is NOT MUCH SEX.

NOT MORE THAN MEN EVER COULD HANDLE, BUT AS MUCH AS these hopeless men without a solid centre are TRYING TO PUT into.Trying to grab for possession and being rejected/ eaten.Thats the clue of that story.

There is temptation to EROS (not necessarily sex) by these women,which must NOT LEAD TO SEX since Eros is life energy that stands against the death bringing energy of these Argonauts, protagonists of the coming patriarch wartime machinery which did not end up to these days.

This hippy slogan make love not war says it clearly and also the mistake: it is not about making love it is about LIVING, where love -not making love- is a red thread going through.- the stimulus and fruity juice of life.- the alternative of power, (Pentesilea tried to stop this power war man business by denying any sex as long as there is this war business since this is the only language men do understand.

When I remember what we heard at Benjamin's place, there is this thing in my mind of this very excessive saxophone part while you were rolling in the ocean on piano and Benjamin was moving the beams of the ship and Didier was stirring the foams of the sea,threading its depth.... it sounded like the ship drowning any minute turning over and getting swallowed by the sea and its torments, breaking down,as the lines of the horn were going up and down and under but at the end coming out safely yet by surprise there where the sea suddenly calmed and straightened out, rescued by the sailors teamwork....the authentic Argonauts of the moments of the poetic dream....

So this is a perfect example of what I wrote already earlier on new language collaborative about drowning and rescued by drums cello piano and love . This is no program music , but these text visions are instant composition cryptics passing through my/our mind provoked by stories we tell each other before playing and which take possession of us, each one in a different way....

While playing and identifying with these energies we ride on or are possessed by being tuned in.- moments where i am so thankful of help and presence of you being companions sailing through the open music seas,to hold on me and hold me on with, for the vessel to pass its adventurous roll through the straits of sea (meeresenge) avoiding its rocks in the way by being the rock themselves made of hope and confidence in unison TOGETHERNESS ... etc etc the pirates still are onto these days to whatever the future may bring....". composed and edited by Mario Rechtern and Eric Zinman, additional editing by Lo Galluccio

Eric Zinman

=

studio234@ericzinman.com

announcing....

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL

CONFERENCE ON THE ARTS IN SOCIETY

July 22-25 2010

University of Sydney, Australia

2010

The *International Conference on the Arts in Society* and *The International Journal of the Arts in Society* provide an intellectual platform for the arts and art practices, and enable an interdisciplinary conversation on the role of the arts in society. They are intended as a place for critical engagement, examination and experimentation of ideas that connect the arts to their contexts in the world - in studios and classrooms, in galleries and museums, on stage, on the streets and in communities.

The 2010 Conference will coincide with the Sydney Biennale, and will be held in conjunction with featured exhibitions and programs. The Biennale of Sydney was created in 1973 as an international showcase for contemporary art. Its aim was to develop and present a program that challenged traditional thinking and encouraged innovative, creative expression. Within its first decade of exhibitions (1973-82) the Biennale of Sydney was among the first to celebrate Australia's cultural and ethnic diversity; the first to show indigenous art in an international contemporary art context; the first to focus on Asia and the contemporary art of the region. It was among the first to present to wide audiences the art of the social change movements which transformed Australian society in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The occasion of the Sydney Biennale provides an opportunity for the Conference to serve as a node in the larger phenomenon of fairs, festivals, and their networks. As such, the Arts Conference aims to discover what values, instincts and common ground may exist within the arts and their practices and sites of reception around the world. Your participation shapes the Conference itself.

As well as an impressive line-up of plenary speakers, the Conference will also include numerous paper, workshop and colloquium presentations by practitioners, teachers and researchers. We would particularly like to invite you to respond to the Conference Call-for-Papers. Presenters may choose to submit written papers for publication in *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*. If you are unable to attend the Conference in person, virtual registrations are also available which allow you to submit a paper for refereeing and possible publication.

Whether you are a virtual or in-person presenter at this Conference, we also encourage you to present on the Conference YouTube Channel. Please select the Online Sessions link on the Conference website for further details.

The deadline for the next round in the call for papers (a title and short abstract) is 8 October 2009. Future deadlines will be announced on the Conference website after this date. Proposals are reviewed within two weeks of submission. Full details of the Conference, including an online proposal submission form, are to be found at the Conference website - <http://www.Arts-Conference.com/>.

We look forward to receiving your proposal and hope that you will be able to join us in Sydney in July 2010.

<http://www.Arts-Conference.com/>

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Colin Rhodes
Dean and Director
Sydney College of the Arts
University of Sydney, Australia
For the Advisory Board, International Conference on the Arts in Society and The International Journal of the Arts in Society
colin.rhodes@arts-conference.com

Improvisation DIVERSITY+CHANGE

Uncovering New Social Paradigms Within Spontaneous Musical Creativity

UCSC/ISIM Festival / Conference at UCSC

2009

60 events
4 days

jam packed with innovative presentations,
concerts, films, workshops, and
panel discussions
with guests from
around the globe.

dec. 3-6



an artist's impressions...

by Killick Hinds

2009

a short report

A kind of magic happened a few weeks ago in Santa Cruz at the University of California campus. **Geri Allen's** piano concert in Recital Hall 101 coincided with my evening feeding schedule. I threw hunger to the wind as robust, elegant, damper-off, colorful washes of sound stacked and combined in the performance space, an ethereal bonus to the deliberate keystrokes Ms. Allen offered us. It was ecstatic music, I couldn't help but feel as my stomach grumbled, ratcheting up a deep connection within. Soon I surprised myself with the restraint.

I had to muster to keep from shouting the thought bouncing around my head in ten thousand point marquee glow, "I FUCKING LOVE FOOD!!!" Yes, to the music! Yes, to eats! Yes! Yes! Yes! On reflection, I could have let it rip, inviting a quick and uncomfortable ushering to the curb. Improvisation can absorb such a disturbance to the force, though it certainly would have changed the flow of the evening. Seldom do we get



to experience the mind/body/soul connection in so visceral and raw a way. I kept my impulses inside in the moment, but am sure glad to share it now. Improvisation can do this. IMPROVISATION! I was in town for the **UCSC-ISIM *International Festival and Conference***.

I'm a first-timer to any ***International Society For Improvised Music*** event, and it was happening in one of my favorite places in all the world. My history with Santa Cruz includes my instruments Big Red and the H'arpeggione, both made by my good friend, **Fred Carlson**, in the Bonny Doon hills just up the coast. Fred and I had the honor to co-present on taking an idea and seeing it through to physical fruition. Talking it out, I more completely realized what a huge part of my life, and of my developing improvisational sensibility, the instruments have been. I've grown up alongside them. Fred highlighted the beneath-the-surface improvisational aspects of his creative endeavors from lutherie to songwriting. The H'arpeggione and harp guitar Big Red have kin and kith spanning hundreds of years and a few continents, though they are modern manifestations of the muse. Having a relatively blank slate with which to struggle, discover, and soar has been amazing for my music. The future is unwritten as I enjoy the now, and I thank Fred for this. And I thank improvisation.



Fred Carlson (inventor)



Killick Hinds (artist-H'arpeggione)

Santa Cruz terrain is in places steep, to put it mildly. Each day I perched my rental car in the Core West Structure, a redwood ensquared Endor Forest cement bunker, a Himalaya yaw above much of the festival action. I can't say irritation was the strong note in my affect, rather huffing and puffing with a sweaty finish. I fancy myself in good shape and, true, on a flat stretch, watch out! This several-times-daily traverse at first made me feel double the age of the slinky college students, which I just about am, though inspired a dusting off of certain underused leg musculature, something coming in handy during these shortest days of winter...I front-loaded my seasonal exercise. For this I again give thanks to improvisation. I wouldn't've done it else-wise.

Some highlights: harpist Susie Allen and her students Aniela, Drake, and Chris from CalArts made brilliant introspective waves in the awfully chilly Kresge Town Hall, a Peach Pit-esque (90210 fans, anyone?) theater room. They played beautifully despite cold fingers, and gave us impassioned insight into their motivations. I got to play with them later on that night in their waterfront rental house, along with Roman Stolyar from Siberia...thanks be to improvisation. Levy Lorenzo's light controlled sound trigger in a dark classroom was a sonority seance with wonderful wow factor. Trumpeter Dave Ballou cut the bull in helping students find what really jazzes them, especially if they're gonna play jazz. The last minute addition of Gino Robair gave us maybe the best microphone solo ever. I really loved Charles Lloyd's pianist; who is this guy? He's great! Somebody should discover him. Oh, haha, the program tells me he's Jason Moran. I think people know. There was a spontaneous big group with horns, strings, and electronics that held together nicely, passing the baton at all the right times in all the right ways. And there was the sweet Sunday morning duo of saxophonist Kate Olson and guitarist Gary Prince.

Now the scheduling was less tidy than it could have been. When there was a start-time delay it log-jammed the next, and the next.

I'd like to see two things when ISIM again meets:

The first is less emphasis on delivering papers, and more on playing.

We can dance about architecture in the abstract. Here's an opportunity to get all these hearts and minds in for some serious getting down.

The second is I'd like an equalizing of the famous/obscure, celebrity/upstart dynamic. I've seen it done at the High Zero Festival in Baltimore. Everyone accorded the same. It yields stratospheric results. And it would seem to, as ISIM aims, "Rebuild Global Community Through the Arts".

The days of rigid hierarchy are numbered in the improvisational world. Sure, we can recognize excellence and achievement and longevity, yet there's something to be said for commitment in the moment. Everyone attending made an effort to get to Santa Cruz, newbees and old-timers alike. There was a considerable outpouring of time and money, and certainly energy. Recognizing this is only fair, and would serve as a model to bring back to our homes, schools, offices, and to our relationships with ourselves, each other and to the Earth. It's a young organization, ISIM, and it's got a heck of an exciting road ahead. We're dealing with improvisation, the most ancient and Zen of human interactions. IMPROVISATION! For this I am so incredibly thankful.

Peace and Love,

Killick

written in Athens, Georgia
December 22, 2009
www.killick.me

International Society for Improvised Music

I.S.I.M.

Third annual conference

"Improvisation and Identity: Discovering Self and Community in a Trans-Cultural Age"

by LaDonna Smith

2008



University of Denver, Dec 5-7, 2008. Friday-Sunday

When **Charlie Parker** stated that "if you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn," he conveyed, in his inimitable way, the capacity of improvisation to serve as a vehicle for integrating the totality of influences that shape personal and social identity. From class, culture, economics, and ecology to gender, race, sexuality, and spirituality; improvising musicians spontaneously meld these and other aspects of their being in expressions that serve as both profound personal and collective commentaries. In an era in which unprecedented levels of superficiality, alienation, and violence often overshadow a growing interest in creative and transpersonal development, and where an ever-escalating morass of data threatens to engulf a genuine cross-fertilization between disciplines and cultures; the importance of a creative vehicle for accessing and expressing one's inner and outer worlds has never been greater. Improvisation not only excels in this regard, it also—through the very moment-to-moment decision-making sequences that require individuals to penetrate beyond ordinary patterns of behavior—may exemplify the dissolution of provincial and nationalistic tendencies that divide communities and countries in our politically fragile world. Improvisation, in fact, may be the ultimate lens through which the quest for self and community is revealed to be as much a collective as a personal endeavor. -Ed Sarath, President ISIM

The 2008 Third Annual Conference Report

Keynote Address: Roscoe Mitchell

Featured Performers and Speakers: Joelle Leandre and India Cooke

Why join an organization to improvise? There's just something to be said for getting out

of your own backyard, or community, and joining at the crossroads of academia vs. practice. Diversity being the main theme of this, and many of the I.S.I.M. conferences, the conference brings together many artists, listeners, educators, researchers, and professional practitioners of the art of improvisation. From the grass-roots experimenters of small communities from around the United States, to the academic theorists and philosophers, to well and lesser known jazz greats, student ensembles, laptop orchestra, inventors of home-made musical instruments, ensemble paradigms of contemporary classical forms, forms of musical meditation and minimalism, to multi-ethnic fusion, the broad spectrum of improvisation in both life and musical experience points to the common ground of our encounters.

This being the annual conference of the Society of Improvised Music, a three-day whirlwind event. Never a moment of rest, with more presenter choices than one can possibly attend, musicians and scholars meet at the crossroads and witness the practice of improvised music, the discussions surrounding and relating to the process of uncertainty, and unpredictability in society, reflected in the intuitive processes that frequently solve the experiences of the moment not only in our practice of music making, but in life itself. From the development of cohesion and flow, from fragments and beginnings, into shapes and excursions, we investigate the course of this music and the relationships that it encourages.

Many themes were presented from *Transcending Boundaries to Enrich the Collective Whole* by Andrew Goodrich to *Exploring the Unknown: Accepting Uncertainty* by panelists Charity Chan, Simon Rose, and Cesar Villavicencio. Practical methods were presented, from *Integrating Improvisation and Composition with Technology* by Christian Pincock to *Improvisation and How People Talk with Each Other* by Misha Glouberman. These are just a few examples of some of the presentations that you might expect to catch at an I.S.I.M. Conference.

Out of the woodwork, this year's conference also had a greater presence of *grass-roots* presenters, unassociated with academia, but practitioners of improvised music from the base of players and presenters in non-academic communities. Notably here was the presence of master percussionist and improviser extraordinaire, Tatsuya Nakatani, who gave a practical review of his everyday life on tour in Europe, Japan and America. Also, special to this year was the presence of the Shaking Ray Levi Society, from Chattanooga Tennessee, who presented "*Old-Timey Avant-garde in the New South*," a rich and inspiring talk on some of the ways that the Society has enriched the community through performances, but also through "hands-on" workshops in improvisation aimed at Senior

Citizens, Children with Autism, the deaf and the blind.

Also in the grass-roots sector, none other than an enormous showing of presence of the Denver and Boulder communities that hosted the conference, diverse groups of artists and venues presenting through lively panel discussions, sharing of information and performance. Local groups who performed included Rhythmic Void, The Playground, and the Boulder Improviser's Collective.

In Touch: Listening to Transparency in Improvisational Music Therapy

presented by a classically educated pianist, Carol Arnason, from Canada, in which she shared reflections on improvisation and identity, through musical excerpts, clinical examples and personal narratives.

Janet Feder and the Naropa Ensemble performed improvisations incorporating elements of Buddhist Contemplative Practice, with a vocal sounding of the room, moving to instrumental dialogs based on games, structures, and exercises.

TAG (Trans-cultural Alliance Group) explores with field recordings, electronics, projection, and structured improvisations, sonic meta cultural experience in signal and game processes. Computer networks, technological advances in subliminal communication bordering conscious recognition of diverse & distant societies and foreign memetic constructions.

Sarah Weaver presented on *Deep Tones for Peace,a co-located performance for peace in the Middle East, taking place April 25, 2009 between Jerusalem and New York, streamed world-wide. Twenty internationally recognized bassists will perform together in an artistic act for peace, connected live on the internet. Project co-ordinators include Mark Dresser, Sarah Weaver, Jean-Claude Jones, Barre Phillips and Suzanne Thorpe. Deep Tones for Peace will be presented by I.S.I.M. in partnership with the World Association of Former United Nations Interns and Fellows, the International Society of Bassists, the Electronic Music Foundation, and affiliated organizations world-wide.*

The Diversity Panel, which included panelists Ed Sarath, Karlton Hester, and India Cooke packed the hall, and provided a very lively discussion on the complex issue of diversity as it relates to improvised music. Including a broad range of "diversity divides" including race, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and other factors, including the schism that separates African and European improvised musical streams and practices, and that which separates the long-standing marginalization of improvised music in musical academe, and that of "hands on" jazz and improvisation practitioners at large. I.S.I.M announced it's new

diversity initiative as an important theme of the organization.

Roscoe Mitchell was the keynote speaker on the first session. A world-renowned solo performer and founding member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, surprisingly, he did not even open his horn case, a disappointment to many of us. Instead, seated on stage behind a laptop and some papers, he presented a rather dry "informance" of some of the people and projects that he was involved with in the 60's, with power-point slides of some of the visually based experiments of the day. Although interesting on it's own right, this presentation could have been presented in a classroom, and a more galvanizing presentation of a musical, and inspirational note would have been more appropriate for the gathering present at the I.S.I.M. opening session. It constituted a waste of his presence and talent in my opinion. Furthermore, on a tight schedule, he quickly whisked away from the conference, and was unavailable for any further contact or contribution.

Many other amazing performances were scattered throughout the day, and Showcase presentations were presented in the evening... Headliners for this year's I.S.I.M Conference were Joelle Leandre and India Cooke, a long-standing duo, who played a very high energy and engaging set on Friday night. I was invited to join them for two pieces, creating a violin-violoncello-bass trio, three diverse women improvisers from different geographical and cultural backgrounds upping the sonic energy in this first ever meeting of these three on stage. In the true spirit of improvisation, no rehearsal was necessary!

Other performers of note during the festival aspect of the conference included Vinny Goliasolo woodwinds (a "powerhouse" performance!) an appearance by poet Trudy Morse, honoring Sun Ra in the opening of the first Showcase Concert, the Roman Stoylar and Susan Allen duo, Stringtrek-LaDonna Smith & Misha Feigin. From Italy, Gianni Mimo-Angelo Contini- Stefano Pastor in "Forgiving July". Trombonist Jen Baker with a slideshow Barns of Music, Afro-Celtic Improvisations for voice and hand percussion by Judith Coe and Salil Sachdev. Paul Riola and Bottesini- an incredibly interesting jazz based ensemble consisting of Paul Riola, Vinny Golias, Michael Vlatkovich, Glen Taylor, James Hoskins, Doun Anderson and Antwon Owens. There was the Electro Acoustic Duo of David Borgo and Jeff Kaiser, Mark Harris and the Random Axe Trio. Also of note were improv-compositions for brass and piano by Michael Jeffrey Stephens, Stephanie Phillips and the Texas State Improvisation Ensemble stood out as a notable classically influenced entity, Norman Lowrey and Singing Masks were as otherworldly as the Avatar Orchestra : Virtually Yours - a mixed reality performance online with members spread across three continents including Tina Pearson, Viv Corringham, Norman Lowrey, Tom Bickley and Pauline Oliveros. Nebraska based Jay Kreimer presented a "hands on" workshop with

home-made musical inspirations. There was the improvisation driven electro acoustic ensemble, Chris Chalfant's Looking through Trees for Multi-media, the EarWorm Improvisation Ensemble, among others. The University of Colorado Jazz Combo, Boulder Laptop Orchestra, the Playground, Rhythmic Void, and the Boulder Improviser's Collective, all active in the local improv scene were well represented in the conference program.

Included in the agenda was the I.S.I.M annual meeting, and a responsive closing remarks and feedback session.

The **International Society for Improvised Music** celebrated performances, discussions, papers, workshops, and other presentations for its third successful conference during December 2008. The theme is compatible across wide-ranging approaches to improvised performance, it invites wide-ranging pedagogical applications, and suggests connections to wide-ranging, cross-disciplinary areas. **I.S.I.M.** is committed to diversity in its programming. In this way, we hope to grow the organization to be a springboard for individuals and organizations to meet, connect, collaborate, and support a vision for the role of improvisation in the future of music and world applications.

-LaDonna Smith,
ISIM Board of Directors

Members submit conference proposals in performance, pedagogy, papers & workshops.

For more information and instructions for joining **I.S.I.M.**

please visit www.isimprov.org .

I.S.I.M.

International Society of Improvised Music

the forum of improvisers –from past to future



by **Roman Stolyar**

2008

Conference of the international society of improvised music

Denver December 5-7 2008.

Charley Parker's, declaration: *If you cannot live it-it will never come out of your horn."*

To act outside ordinary stereotypes of behavior, conveys in his unique manner, that improvisation can sever as a unifying force for all influences that form personal social identification. From the class origin, culture, economy and ecology to gender, race, sexuality and spirituality –all these and others aspects of their life-musician-improvisers fuse spontaneously into one expressing this way their deep personal and collective essence. In our time, unprecedented superficiality, alienation and cruelty threaten to sweep away the true change of cultures and disciplines that makes importance of creative expressivity more important than ever.

That improvisation is not only distinct in this way, it is also –by creating spontaneous situations that require from an individual, the capability to prevent the spread of narrow-local and nationalistic tendencies, which separate communities and countries in our politically fragile world. Improvisation, is a superior looking glass, giving us insight and tools to contend with all vitally important issues of personality and society that require individual and collective efforts. This was a message of the annual conference of ISIM, arguably the youngest, but already very influential organization of its kind, uniting improvisers from 25 countries.

The founder of ISIM, Ed Sarath, defined the theme of the conference as “Improvisation and Identity in the transcultural epoch”. Such approach requiring a very serious selection of themes and presentations.-and the team of organizers lead by executive director Sarah Weaver handed this difficult task wonderfully. Three days of the conference were incredibly intense– every hour spent at

the Lamont School of Music and Jazz of University of Denver was packed with two-three different events –it was a difficult situation for someone who arrived from a different side of the world tried to absorb all aspects of such an important summit.

When I was preparing to go to the conference, I looked at the list of participants and discovered that I know many of them. Some of them –a Michigan saxophone player Katharine Olson, Memphis pianist Michael Stevens and an alt player from Birmingham Alabama, LaDonna Smith, I already met before, other names, such Stephen Nachimovich or Art Lande –I have heard before. And of course, presence of special duets-a string duo of Joel Leandre and India Cooke as well as a legendary sax player Rosko Mitchell was quite an attractive plus.

The presentation given by the respected master of improvised music was a bit disappointing – instead an expected live performance, Roscoe Mitchell present to the public video recording of a cycle of his compositions called “Songs in the Wind. These works, created by Mitchell during the period from 1982 =1992, were a combination of music, dances and costumes, and moving installations. These black and white recordings made by some amateur by some reason associated with the beginning of the 20 Century futuristic experiments that became history long time ago. Music accompanying this happening also felt as self-conscious anachronism –sound for the sake of sound, pause for the sake of pause, experiment for the sake of experiment. It seems that the audience politely paid tribute to the achievement of the master than sincerely enjoyed his work Mitchell looked tired (maybe from music?) and all my hope to communicate with him personally were vain – after the end of his presentations, the master quickly packed and departed to the airport on his way to the next engagement.

The next live performance did not bring too much joy as well. It was a group with prevailing horns - brass instruments and reeds, -was playing super loud during the next 20 minutes absolutely excluding dialogues and preferring to play all together without pauses. Some technical exquisiteness(flute with a sax’s mouth piece, a trumpet with removed (kronas-don’t know what he means) as well as attempts of the leader Paul Skea to build a semblance of form and to lead the process with conducting gestures, did not save the situations. The well-informed audience, which consisted exclusively of working improvisers, called the ensemble’s style “the children disease in improvisation (this is a hint to Lenin’s work “A children disease of leftism in communism}

But a chamber duo from the University of Denver gave reason for joy. Young musicians a pianist Conrad Kehn a vibraphonist Mark Clifford, performed a very subtle, fluid composition as if they did it contrary to what the previous ensemble played –almost extremely surf. Music developed smoothly, without rush, in waves, sometimes it had some shades of tonality, Often Kehn simply mediated on major/minor 3 resembling Morton Feldman, The vibraphonist -just like his partner-was subtle and inventive-the sounds of his bow gilding over the vibraphone weaved into the texture of the composition. Of the duo is at the beginning of their journey, but what these young improvisers do gives hope.

A big part of the conference consisted of presentations involving electronics. From that group I can distinguish to collectives, both are the duos. Jeff Morris and Eric Clark from Texas built their game on transformation of acoustic instruments’ samples –a violin-recorded in real time. A sampler device created by Morris changes violin sounds beyond recognition with the player himself brings these changes using a hand controller. Because of such manipulations of samples, electronically produced sounds don’t come across as like something alien in combination with a violin but serve as

complicated contra point.

Kaborg, a duo from San Diego, follows another path in its musical exploration. A saxophonist David Borgo and a trumpeter Jeff Kaiser combined live sounds of their instruments with prepared effects from their laptops and pedal effects. The performance of the duo was very musical –with plenty of nuances, a property often ignored by many electronics players. Somewhere in the middle of the composition suddenly there was a sound of a flute –and it sounded very organic. By the way, the flute was self-made with some interesting tunings, scales, and Jeff Kaiser trumpet had quarter-toners.

From electric acoustic music to pure acoustic, and that was the style that prevailed at the conference. A wonderful pianist, Michael Jeffrey Stevens, played the role of a composer at that time and his quintet for brass and piano was presented in the University Hamilton Hall. A composition combining in itself by the author's words, seem to be more compositional. That was indicated by the presence of a conductor and an abundance of sheet music. The music of Stevens was well calculated, stern, with perfect counterpoints, dry and exact pauses, clear texture and was an example of the way an improviser who understood the form from inside can successfully use this knowledge in composition.

The ethnic improvisation was also not forgotten, and that's not strange because all traditional music, to some degree is improvisational. A pianist and ethno-musicologist Phil James gave a narrative about subtleties of improvisation on the Japanese flute, Shakuhachi – though masters of Shakuhachi do not like to use the term improvisation but anyway they improvise within their canon. A teacher from Massachusetts, Salil Sachdev, amused everyone with his energetic improvisation . . . on a metallic bucket that he found accidentally at some store. After the concert, Dr. Sachdev confessed that despite his Indian origin he cannot play table, but for a long time he's studied African techniques playing on percussion. It was a true example of cultural fusion. In the evening of the same day, Sachdev showed one more example of such fusion playing in a duo with Colorado vocalist Judith Coe. Their program combined elements of African and Arabic rhythms with shrill vocalizations "in tongues." Judith improvised not only melodic lines but also words.

This performance, as well as a few others, was a part of one of two big concerts which completed the first two days of a three day conference. I was lucky to play in one of those concerns, in a duo with my old partner and friend, California harpist Susan Allen. By lucky circumstance, our duo was the only collective that played twice. Our 10-minute piece played in the first concert was some sort of advertisement of a master class we conducted the next morning. We had a good crowd. We decided not to stay within the frame of a master class and concentrated on live performance.. The first improvisation, where Susan played a Korean harp and I used a prepared piano, produced a stormy reaction. A member of the audience came to the grand piano, asked questions, and wanted me to show them certain things. There is a guy, Stefan Nachmanovitch, who questioned Allen about subtleties of playing harp, suddenly began singing. I joined him and it gave birth to the next improvisation. A spontaneous in all senses dialogue among us and with the public accompanied our whole presentation, equalizing improvisation and life. When our time was finished, the conversation continued in the foyer. I must be sincere to be congratulated by Nachmanovitch, and Art Lande was incredibly pleasant.

Stephan Nachmanovitch is a significant person in modern improvisation. His famous book, *Free*

Play: Improvisation in Life and Art, is an example of deep research of the role of improvisation in various aspects of human activities. It exhibits a very broad scope of knowledge and expanded world view of the author. After reading this book, I began to communicate with the author. Later I gave lectures where I used improvisational models of Nachmanovitch. But the first time I met him personally was at this conference. Even more interesting was to hear how Nachmanovitch improvises, because books and articles about a musician cannot give you an idea about it. And at last it all became true: Nachmanovitch's trio, with the intriguing name "Sixth Sense" came on stage. They entered the stage playing and moving freely across the space. Nachmanovitch was barefoot, moving his bow smoothly on a half dark stage. His partners were as good as him, a Texas viola player, Stephanie Phillips, and a saxophonist and flutist from San Jose (Santa Cruz?), Carlton Hester. Hester just turned upside down my concept of saxophone sound in improvisational music. For the first time, I heard the sound of such purity and subtlety that it brought the feeling of something a long time forgotten, something you want to come back to. Those words can be applied to all music of Sixth Sense. It was reminiscent of Indian, Arabic, Medieval European or classical polyphonics. At the same time, it was neither of all of those. It was completely self-contained, although founded in illusions. This music was enchanting, and what was most important, it touched invisible strings of the heart.

A performance of The Texas Improvisational Ensemble produced not less emotional impact, resembling stylistically the Namanovitch trio. Together with Stephanie Phillips, the students and teachers from Texas State University came on stage, and again emotions and beauty produced their impact. People in the audience fell under the spell of classical and essentially gentle and subtle improvisations of this collective. Violin, viola, cello, oboe, and two laptops – though all six played together only in the final piece, forming a trio and quartets before that. Some of the people in the audience became so emotional that they sincerely cried tears of joy. Very seldom does improvisational music affect people that way. A confession made by Stephanie in our conversation overwhelmed me. It became clear that the ensemble leader is absolutely unfamiliar with new and fashionable concepts of improvising. And all her methods of improvisations were based on academic music of the first part of the 20th century. In this case, is ignorance a disadvantage? I doubt it.

Violist Ladonna Smith and guitarist Misha Feigin were musicians with a totally different style. The sound of Feigin's guitar strongly reminded one of Derek Bailey. The music they played was tough, sometimes poignant as a romance, sometimes a duo of viola and guitar became a real duel. Especially unexpected was Feigin's true non-idiomatic improvisation on . . . balalaika. In this piece, Ladonna switched from viola to violin, playing it with not less virtuosity and ingenuity. In this performance, Smith reminded some of a mischievous girl. It seemed that she teased Feigin, who was concentrating on playing unbelievable chords on his instrument.

Perhaps the only European collective performing at the conference was an Italian trio *Forgiving July*. A forty minute long performance of the trio was a brilliant demonstration of a superb sense of form, deep knowledge of modern academic music and live wits. A violinist, Stefano Pastor, a trombonist, Angela Continni, and trio leader, saxophonist Gianni Mimmo, played spontaneous improvisations so convincingly it felt like everything was carefully pre-prepared. Of course, they had some rehearsed moments, but the music was predominantly improvisational. The ability of the musicians to play together was remarkable in playing codas, abrupt and unexpected, which gave their music sharpness. When the musicians began playing intricate polyphonic textures, consisting of a brutally dissected "Donna Lee," the audience exploded with applause and cheers.

The audience was no less shocked by the performance of Californian virtuoso saxophonist Vinny Golia. But the reasons for that were different. A one hour long solo program is a brave thing to do

for a horn player. Golia's program was more of a demonstration of exotic instruments than a meaningful musical performance. You could hear absolutely unbelievable sounds coming from the stage, and those sounds came from unbelievable kinds of horns: contrabass clarinet, bass saxophone, Hungarian tarogato, and a huge contrabass flute. For dessert Golia played a virtuoso solo on a tiny soprillo – the smallest representative of the saxophone family. In the beginning of his performance, Golia displayed this instrument and gave a warning, "If I begin my performance with this instrument, you wouldn't want to hear anything else." And he was right. The sound of soprillo, and its sweetness and beauty, really was incomparable with anything.

Everybody waited eagerly for special guests. The fame of contrabass player Joelle Leandre in the world of free improvisation doesn't require any comment. And the violin player India Cooke perfectly fit as one of the headliners according to the theme of the conference. She worked with Pharaoh Sanders, Son Ra, Peter Kowald, Cecil Taylor, and other famous performers. Cooke was blunt in her interview: "Nobody takes a black woman seriously in jazz or in classical music if she is not a vocalist."

The duo of Joelle and India consistently contradicted that statement. From the beginning to the very end of their program the duo increased in power and energy. It increased energy to the level of a nonfeminine quality. Leandre's contrabass moaned and roared, and even the screeching of its stand while spinning, Joelle converted into music. Unreal (there is no other way to call it) sounds of bass were joined by India's violin, which wailed and signed like gospel music. On stage, the performers played dramas and tragic comedy in which there is no place for man. As a third partner, the duo has chosen not a man but inventive Ladonna Smith. The choice was 100% right. The duo's performance had already peaked and couldn't progress farther by the efforts of two players, so the appearance of Ladonna moved the concert to a new energy level.

Many words about all sorts of differences – from gender to racial and national – were offered as a discussion, the theme of which was "Improvisation and Diversity." The word diversity for Americans means much more than its direct meaning; the discussion covered the whole spectrum of possibilities and a vast field of options to effect those possibilities, both in music and in life. In his opening words, Ed Sarath said, "All my judgments of everything that is happening around me are judgments of a white man who never experienced discrimination. Other people might feel differently." In this case, others are evidently African Americans. Perhaps there are racial problems in the world of improvised music as well. Though some things were very strange to hear for someone who is not an American.

Our former compatriot, guitarist Misha Feigin, shared thoughts concurrent with those of the author of the presentation: "The key to mutual understanding between representatives of different races and people is educating them together from a young age because young children are unrestricted." An even more simple thought shared by Memphis pianist Michael Stevens when he reacted to the question, "Why is improvisational music not popular among common people?" Stevens exclaimed, "For the majority, all life is everyday toil from 9 to 5, and all they want after such work is a simple rest. What music."

Another important discussion facilitated by a collective of improvisers from Boulder was called "How Free is Our Play?" This discussion was dedicated to the very same music discussed in the previous paragraph. Saxophonist Mark Miller started the discussion with a touching statement,

“We consider ourselves romantics of improvisation, perhaps the last romantics in this genre, because with sadness we notice that melody, harmony and rhythm are disappearing more and more from improvisation.” Art Lande is a resident of Boulder and he facilitates improvisational sessions in this town for the last 35 years. He said to his old friend and colleague, “I have a perception when the modern improvisers play, they depict a man with a tremor.” And then he showed this tremor to a laughing audience. Ed Sarath shared a curious anecdote. Once he heard an opinion given by one improviser reacting to the performance of one non-idiomatic collective, “How beautiful it is, there is no rhythm, melody, or harmony – only music.” A stormy but positive discussion showed clearly that improvisers don’t deny the rights to a historical musical heritage – classical and traditional music. They clearly understand that they stand on the shoulders of those giants. Summarizing everything, Stephen Nachmanovich said, “The diversity that we spoke about in the previous discussion is granted by the fact that we are reaching from a variety of roots. The wars between African American and European musical traditions, between Classics and Swing, are outdated. It was all left in the 60’s. Now we live in a different time.”

A different time means different movements and different perspectives. Members of ISIM had a serious conversation about the future of improvisational music. They discussed how to increase the efficiency of annual meetings, how to make stronger contacts between improvisers of different countries, is there a need for an online publication discussing the society’s work, how to attract attention from governmental structures, universities and private foundations to the work of the conference. All of these are topical problems for such a young organization. But the very fact that such a society of improvisers exists, and successfully functions, bears witness that the art of improvisation should be taken seriously in all respects.

After the conference was over, Ed Sarath asked me an unexpected question:

“What do you think? Will it be possible sometime to have this conference in Russia?”

And the thought surprisingly warmed me. Actually, why not? It’s always worth a try . . .

Roman Stolyar:

Member of ISIM Advisory Board

Denver – Vilnius – Novosibirsk

December, 2008

translated from Russian by **Misha Feigin**

DEVO

Get FRESH with new album, tour, documentary

By Patrick Flanary

2010

Ignorance used to be bliss. Yet somewhere along our evolution excursion, we all went ape.

This week our news media delivered a gem of a story, a slice of life so tasteless it made one almost wish for another aimless balloon over Colorado: the evolution of swine flu parties. People hoping to build immunity to the pandemic are flocking together to get each other sick. Are we witnessing de-evolution at work?

"Well, absolutely," says Gerald Casale, who co-founded rock band Devo soon after he watched his friend die at the hands of the U.S. military. Allison Krause was one of four students killed on May 4, 1970, when the Ohio National Guard opened fire on a Kent State University student protest.

From the bloodshed a band was born by a gang of art students already furious with Nixon's recklessness in Cambodia and Vietnam. Originally from Akron, Devo coined their name from a disgust with humanity's regressive evolution in daily society. Man had resorted to primitive, chauvinistic and thoughtless action and had clearly begun developing in the wrong direction. Man was de-evolving. Ergo, Devo.

"There's no question that de-evolution is real. It came true. The world went backwards and down," says Casale, whose band will unleash a pair of remastered albums and hit the road for a seven-city tour Tuesday.

"They were predictive. Now they're reprising their past, saying 'I told you so,'" says Robert Margouleff, who produced Devo's 1980 *Freedom of Choice* album, which spawned the hit "Whip It."

Known for their minimalist synthetic sound, herky-jerky performances and uniform wardrobe -- sometimes clad in plastic JFK wigs, sometimes in flowerpot-like headgear -- Devo sparked two major musical movements during the '70s: punk rock and new wave.

"They really are the first post-modern band," says Jade Dellinger, a Tampa art curator and co-author of [We Are Devo!](#), the group's only biographical account.

"Their ambition was to sign with one of the biggest record companies in the world -- which they did -- and to sort of dismantle them from the inside, which they never did," adds Dellinger.

Warner Bros. Records -- the label that dropped Devo 25 years ago after six albums -- signed the band again in September. Such a move should almost be considered sacrilegious, even anti-Devo, given the band's outspoken cynicism toward record companies.

"They're sort of countering what they used to make fun of," observes *We Are Devo!* co-author David Giffels. "But they pull it off in a charming way."

"It's the devil you know," says Casale, who insists the music industry has dramatically changed since Devo and Warner Bros. parted ways in 1984. The bassist adds that tours, rather than album sales, bring home the bacon and Warner Bros. knows how to whip Devo into shape.

Mark Mothersbaugh, the other creative half of the Devo brainchild, admits: "It was ironic. The old Warner Brothers we signed with, they were just thugs. I was totally ready to say 'forget it, I don't want anything to do with it.' But I think we'll be a good match for each other."

Now flirting with age 60, four original members of Devo -- Mark Mothersbaugh, Gerald Casale and their brothers, Bob 1 and Bob 2 -- are backed by 36-year-old session drummer Josh Freese, who also toured with Weezer and Sting this year. Tour rehearsals commenced Oct. 21 at Mutato Muzika, Mark Mothersbaugh's West Hollywood studio. Devo will perform back-to-back nightly shows of two early albums in their entirety (Q: *Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!* and *Freedom of Choice*). Between the albums, Devo are relearning 11 songs they haven't played live in about 30 years, says Casale.

"We try every day to get better at them," he laughs.

"They created their own boogie," says radio personality Kal Rudman. "The Devo crowd in particular catered to a special niche of people, so it becomes a real treat to go see them again."

Call it foreplay; Devo are just getting warmed up. Paunchier, angrier and more passionate about their de-evolution message than ever, Devo's leaders say these November live dates should prove to be good practice; they've got a tour scheduled for spring, which will coincide with the release of their first full-length recorded project in 20 years. Just don't call it an album.

"Album' is just a term to figure out what we're doing," says Mothersbaugh. He would prefer to release Devo's new stuff online, a few songs at a time. "We'll see what comes out. We're having fun so far."

"The working title is *Fresh Devo*, because it is. We're treating it like produce," Casale points out. "I think it'll carry forward what people like about us."

While submission has never been in Devo's DNA, they've stepped away from the console and invited a handful of producers to remix and rework the finished tracks. Contributors include Greg Kurstin (Geggy Tah, Kris Allen), John Hill (Shakira, Jay-Z) and DJ Adam Freeland. John King of the Dust Brothers -- a duo known for its textured production of the Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique* -- will produce "Step Up," a new Devo song.

To bookend the new album and tour, a Devo documentary will likely hit the big screen next year, says filmmaker Tony Pemberton of Go East Productions, a New York-based company.

"Our release date at the moment is for Fall 2010 or Spring 2011, mostly at festivals and, hopefully, immediately in theatres," says Pemberton.

Before their new album -- whatever form it takes -- finds fruition next spring, Devo will continue to evolve (de-evolve?) with film and television ventures. Gerald Casale describes gradual work on his Devo biopic that follows the band from their early days in Akron to their first days with Warner Bros. Mark Mothersbaugh, whose scoring credits include *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, *Rugrats*, Wes Anderson's films and, most recently, the animated *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, says he plans to pitch an "Adult Swim-style show" along the lines of "a twisted, dark *Dick Tracy*." It too will examine the theory of de-evolution.

"Since the beginning we've been kind of anti-stupidity and pro-information," he says. "I'm all for six billion humans, but I'm not for having them on the planet at the same time."

Fresh Devo won't be the last we'll hear from those iconic perpetrators of political prowess.

"I'm hoping that after we put this out there'll be at least *one* curtain call," Casale laughs.

For their first album in 1978, Devo chose to cover a classic song, one that likely seemed overly ambitious on paper for a band that had just inked a deal with Warner Bros. What Devo crafted remains one of the most inventive covers of all time: a rhythmically robotic version of The Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction."

Well into their sixties, The Stones continue to make music and tour the world for their fans. Will Devo follow suit ten years from now? Mothersbaugh and Casale are, after all, the new wave Jagger and Richards: raucous, haunting, oddly sensual.

"Who knows," says Mothersbaugh. *"Humans might not be around when I'm approaching 70."*

WHAT TO DO AT THE FORK IN THE ROAD?

Improvisation as a model of social behavior and cultural navigational technique

by LaDonna Smith

2009

"How do geese know when to fly to the sun? Who tells them the seasons? How do we, humans, know when it is time to move on? As with the migrant birds, so surely with us, there is a voice within, if only we would listen to it, that tells us so certainly when to go forth into the unknown."

To share life with every human being on the planet, to acknowledge the common current of survival of every living creature, of making one's way from birth to maturity, indeed to death itself; we walk the path not knowing really where we come from, or where we will be in the beyond after our death.

Life is a walk that each living entity takes from beginning to end. Each entity, each human being will observe, acknowledge, experience, create, find form and pattern, order and chaos, and make something from it that is uniquely their own. Furthermore, it will be done not so much out of pre-conceived structure, but from a natural progression of action and reaction, discovering and noticing our own life as it unfolds.

This is creating on the fly, as it were. It is the exact principal from which we live that we create our unique expressions. The impulse is the catalyst, improvisation is action and the exploration. Through this process of exploration, the known and the unknown engage in the dance that we have come to know as our reality. It is life. Could we say that improvisation, then, is the art of living?

Acknowledging improvisation as a medium of existence in everyday life, as a principal behavioral pattern for survival, we experience life from one moment to the next. In the progression of events, which we call life, alongside our reaction to these events, many times outcomes are unforeseen. Chance imposes itself on the known, the known reverting again into elements of the unknown. The inevitability of change, by process or disintegration, that gives us a model of reality as an ultimate improvisation. Who is to say, life is pre-planned?

One moment, one line, one page at a time. Indeed we can even divide our lives into chapters as we age, and obtain retrospect. We can then see the development and growth, the linear aspect of our own lives. It is then that we may be gifted with the knowledge that comes from age, with the experiential wisdom, recognizing our path, where we've been, and where it may lead. Our own existence becomes a grand prototype for our artistic behaviors, which in fact is most similar to our very survival behavior.

Surely as we, humans, develop the art of improvisation, we insure our success. Our ability to meet demand as it is presented, or even another dimension: the ability to access our subconscious knowledge, or our involuntary self-defense mechanism, or capture a moment of inspiration through one's self expression as it is revealed to us, is a natural process of the universe. Developing one's talent or skills through action and reaction, is an art developed by the fittest in survival, the most strategic in success, and the unencumbered flow of the imagination of the creative artist. Improvisation is the interaction with the creative spark (or the inspiration) that becomes the form.

It is the survival kit of nature. It has come to light as one of the most common of human behavioral patterns. It crosses all borders of cultural relationship. It bridges geographic, social-economic, institutional, racial, or other boundaries. To bring improvisation into light as a common human behavioral pattern brings about acknowledging the working process by which we all progress through our existence. Through improvisation in the arts, we can enact a model of life processing itself through expression. Expression is the communicating vessel of humanity.

It's not about where we started from, or where we are going to; it's about how we got there. Even though all processes vary, many times, change or significant discovery can be without thought, or effort; but through a mere participation in the natural flow. Other times it occurs with much calculation and plan, an empiric directive of steps or procedures, which lead us from point to point. But the process we are affected by is the part that we give our attention to, that which we notice, that which we feel, and fully experience to be real in the moment of transitions. There is always the gray area of the unknown, of the groping for answers or direction, or the territory of process. That is the territory of improvisation.

A powerful presence of self-awareness, not absentia, but the complete abandon of the ego, serves us well. If we open our eyes and notice, we give our attention to that which *is*, which is *beyond* ourselves, but *present*; intersecting with our awareness in the reality of time as it parades before us in the moment, we develop simultaneously the technique. Improvisation is a natural technique that we employ to create our world, real or imaginary, or indeed to navigate through life.

We have a commonality of human experience. All people, in every sphere and hemisphere, are born into conditions in which they must adapt. They are born out of the safety and darkness of the womb, into a reality of action and reaction, sound and light. Reaction is the normal process of life. From the time we inhale our first breath, utter our first cry, open our eyes for the first time, hear sound affecting us from birth, reach out with our own hand to grab our mothers hand, we are improvising. From birth, all beings react to their unique environmental conditions, and thus develop their own patterns for survival, indeed, for living. There is no school for this journey, only the innate abilities to adapt, to experiment with the moment and notice its result. And to use that experience as a basis for further development in the art of action and reaction, we learn as we create our own life.

It thereby follows that in the natural order of the development of music that the first and primary music of all people were products of a series of discoveries made through the act of improvisation, the *impulse* being the driving force in the development of music, then *action* and *reaction*. It follows that the common thread of all music would be the kinship of improvisation. That not only is improvisation the first music, but it is the precursor of form.

From the discovery of the movements of the voice to the primal pulse evolving beat and rhythm, individual expression of this innate process gives rise to the characteristics of cultural discrepancies, as musical languages formed and developed independently in the evolution of human tribal tendencies. All world music is born from common impulse and physiology—the breath and the pulse.

The pulse is physically integrated into the human anatomical system by the very heartbeat, and even in the movement of the lungs. It is the variation in the rate of the nervous system that gives rise to rhythmic variation in music. The driving force is unseen, but felt. It happens to us. The converse is powerfully true in reverse—that the rhythmic structure in music, elements of tempo and beat forms, conversely affect the nervous system. Synergistically the human organism is tied to rhythm, affected by it, and is inseparable from it. It is the organic structure of the physical makeup of not only human beings; but all life as we know it. Indeed, all movement is rhythm. Through the organs of perception we receive, react and respond. We have even charted the movements of the heavens, both ordered and chaotic. And let that be an analogy to the workings of the mind. The known which we have learned to process through repetitions, and the unknown which we process through adaptability, or improvisation.

Invoke, Imagine, Improvise

Now, because the improvisational characteristic of life is analogous to the creative process in the arts, all humanity may find a common language in the arts. As various cultures all over the world have developed their own cultural identities through their music, visual art, language, and survival skills, or customs, it follows that the outcomes are very different even though the process is the same. It is therefore probable, that with the simple collaborative process employing improvisation as a basic facilitator, a new common language could be reached, and the boundaries between the racial or cultural entities bridged and cultivated into a common expressive exchange.

One human being reaching for another human being, via the language of artistic medium, reaching for the depths, and going for something real. The improvisatory language is so common to humanity that it goes beyond the boundaries of form, or medium. Regardless of the medium, the process is the same. We are always facing choices, and we have the capacity to choose as we explore and transform our lives. As we create art or music, we are shifting, and changing, our position. In dropping our pre-conceptions, we become *open* to the force within and beyond us, manifesting the creation. If one is of the open mindset, and through the mutual recognition of the creative spark that is always present, we can easily shift between any medium, using the same process of discovery, and gently draw new concepts, contexts, or shapes of energies. Going into the subconscious becomes a human ritual, which we all can access. Noticing what happens in that process, and allowing the unhampered flow of the energy, will help us bring into our awareness the archetypes that dominate us, and even to create new ones.

Already, we are seeing the crossing-over of cultural lines in the area of music improvisation. Jazz is frequently now melding with the musical influences of world music; from Pakistan and India, to ritual Eskimo singing, Tuvan chant, from classical concepts of polyphony and sound layering, to a return to recognizing the same complexities in the sounds of nature. Just point to some of the diversity that has infiltrated the forms of jazz, and its palette of possibilities, and its creation of new forms. Without the necessity of adhering to form, form can be found in freedom.

Without a pre-conceived notion of how a music should be styled, musicians who improvise *meet* on equal footing, on the blank precipice, poised to leap, without judgement. Improvisation is a perfect medium for bringing together our diverse languages, and creating one common language from it. –a musical language that everyone can understand....

From our own personal backgrounds and cultural heritages, we bring a unique palette of colors and custom, the very tools for our creation. Personal preferences and pre-dilections contribute to the absolute character that will ultimately prevail in the musical discourse. The next most basic element is that of the *listening procedure*, the ability to turn on *attention*, and to recognize flow. To watch with open minds and ears that which presents itself in the moment. Is the flow a doing, or a non-doing? It is both. It is presence *and* action, an automatism, a connecting, an allowing. *Flow* is being present with time, in total engagement with the *moment*. One moment melts and merges with the next, accessing an energy that has a life of its own.

By giving attention to the phenomena of musical improvisation, by observing and participating in its practice, opens a new avenue of interpersonal and intercultural relationship. Music improvisation can become an ultimate recreational form for human beings to share, to exchange, to appreciate and enjoy. The outcome is not so important as the *process* itself, but it *may* well produce phenomenal and surprising results. As an art form of depth, expression, and reflection, of sheer abandon, of digging into the deep void of the mystery of our life's existence, musical improvisation can give us a technique for a deeper human connection from the source of our subconscious mind. It's practice and appreciation may facilitate a greater consciousness, and indeed the fostering of respect and love among the peoples of the world, for what is greater than sharing one's soul?

Music is a staple of our common languages; it is a litmus of the mystery of life.

Interview Morgan Craft



dialog on black american avant-garde

The following interview took place at Rocca AlMiledo Studios, Toscana, Italia.

2008

Q: How has the move away from New York, which many would consider the center of the world, affected your work, your ideas? I hear you live a pretty isolated life on a mountain deep in Toscana.

Morgan Craft: Yeah, very isolated. The village we live in has a population of eight hundred people. It's been three years since we moved so I can definitely see results. It's true, most artists still insist on living in the city. And most cities now could be interchangeable anyway. I know there is the fantasy of going to a megalopolis to meet likeminded people, have all these experiences, etc. and on a certain level you can. I spent ten years in NY and I don't regret that. You can't buy the lessons of struggling for your art amidst eight million people, trying to find out who you are and what you believe in. I even think it's necessary, if you want to be persuasive as an artist in the twenty first century, to know what the city life does to one. But then I'd turn around and say there is definitely a time to leave. All of the art I've loved was about change, trying something new. And to me, all art comes from the life you live. I'm very critical of the new technologies coming out now but one aspect that is very exciting is the reality of being able to do what you do no matter where you are. A laptop and a cell phone can keep you just as connected as you ever were. I can't believe more people are not taking advantage of this. Then again I can understand why. Art is not being developed along the lines of innovation but of business. Most people don't want to risk not being on the scene and missing that big break. But break into what? Into the establishment. But I look out there and don't see anything I want to waste my time breaking into. The relationship between art and nature shouldn't even have to be mentioned but I can't remember the last time I heard anyone say it. It's just not modern enough to talk about essential things like plants and trees and mountains and oceans. It seems like everybody is rushing to be cyborgs. And I can only speak for myself when I say that walking on concrete between buildings along a grid which never changes just doesn't fulfill

me. I think for an artist, living within nature is the original well of inspiration. Our job is probably the closest to the way nature works than most other endeavors. I can't express how important it is for me to wake up in the country, with fresh air, space and time to really develop. I don't feel any contradiction in being concerned with a music of the future and living a very rustic life. I chop wood, take long walks through the forest, tend a garden, live simple, and then walk inside to a fully operational studio set up. That, to me, is the future. Building a connection with the earth and the body feeds directly into the creativity. Also, when you're isolated you can't run for the distractions like you used to, all you've got is the work you say you love to do, but do you really? You can't fool yourself. And I know that is a very scary place for people, that ledge, that reality away from the fashion, away from the friends. So to go back to your question I'll say that moving here has influenced every single aspect of my life in a beautiful way.

Q: Do you feel there is a relationship between spirituality and avant-garde / experimental musics?

MC: Absolutely. For me, music / art is a spiritual quest, period. They are the same thing. When you start to ask where inspiration comes from then you are dealing with spiritual matters. The breath, flowing naturally, allowing that energy to work through you, these are matters of the spirit. You can see that most people these days refrain from talking about this, but there was a time when it was much more open. Something happened maybe around 1980 that we're still dealing with. I can't say what exactly or when exactly but something shifted. They tried to stop the progress of all these different musics. Jazz, rock, pop, all were rewarded for stopping their progression. Money got big, keeping it safe and marketable got big and the media kept up the pressure. People started talking about maintaining traditions. Music that always was about progress was now told to stop, no more forward motion. And when you stop you no longer are spiritual. Spirit doesn't stop, at least I can't see any evidence of spirit stopping. Where does nature come to a stop? All is morphing, pushing forward, shedding skin, eating one another. So when these people say "we'll pay you to stop", they are trying to keep us away from spirituality. It's about control. Technology also became the focus at around the same time. And the thing with electronics and computers is that they are actually in advance of the people using them. The machine is more powerful than the human at that point. It becomes very easy to let the machine do the playing because the sound is immediately gratifying. I'm not against technology, but it takes time to get inside of it, just like it takes time to get inside of any instrument. So the art moves away from the human and that in turn affects culture because people are listening to this new music and are being transformed away from spirituality, away from the human.

Q: So you're not a big fan of laptop music?

MC: I've heard plenty of great computer based music. I'm not critical of the computer in itself, I'm critical of laziness. It takes about twenty years to really start to find out what you and your instrument can do together, twenty years to get to a symbiosis, and right now this computer music is not that old. Obviously the pioneers get all of my respect, back when it was fresh. Now, since everyone in the first world can afford a Mac it's not very exciting. I've loved the sounds that I've heard and I let them influence me. It stretches out your ears, gets them away from habits, ruts. But now is the time when we'll see who the real artists are. Everybody has heard what these programs can do, now it's time to hear what the human can do through these programs. And this is where the work comes in. The time you have to put in if you really love something. I think you'll see a big shift in these next few years once the cat is out of the bag on how these things work. Right now it's just fashion, it's peer pressure and fashion. You read the magazines or go to the experimental festivals and they make you feel bad if you're not staring at a screen. I don't buy it.

Q: Even so, don't you think computers are the future instrument? I mean,

you play the guitar which some might call a dinosaur. How do you reconcile wanting to play the music of the future on an old instrument?

MC: The future is right here in our mind. An instrument is only a tool to achieve the impossible. So you could play a stick and a stone and if your mind is facing toward the future then you're infinite. That's one thing you learn from getting past the steep learning curve of an instrument, that you have every single sound available to you no matter what you play. In the early stages you want to maybe get all this gear to make strange sounds or something but that's not really futuristic. In fact you'll see how dated these gadgets will sound any day now because the machines are not all of the future. The future is the soul. The human is still the future, still the center of our explorations in conjunction with the new technologies. But the first concern is to get the mind free, then everything else just opens up. You become much more dangerous and exciting when you carry the space travel and weapons and truths around in your head. For me, I love pushing a traditional instrument into new territory, because the guitar has a history, and I can really see myself in relation to greatness in the past. I'm always aware of how far they took it which keeps me on my toes to come with something new.

Q: Are you competitive?

MC: You know, obviously art cannot be measured in any terms of better or worse, but I like healthy competition. I like to be pushed and I like to push. I don't think it has to be a bad thing. See, I come from athletics first, I'm not one of these frail arty folks who never used their bodies. I learned a lot from sports and I have a great deal of respect for athletes. The discipline it takes to learn your art is very closely related to the discipline needed to be an athlete. So in terms of competition I think we can take certain aspects and apply them to art practices in a healthy, positive way. I think it's good to have people who can challenge you, people that force you to get back in the lab. I'm just saying we can use it as one particular facet of this process called art. I wouldn't want to rely on it completely, I just want it as an option.

Q: You say you're an improviser but your work doesn't really fall into the niche we have come to associate with improvised music. I mean, judging by your new work you obviously love structure, melody, harmony, rhythm, which free music tends to eschew altogether. How do you view your methods?

MC: Oh man, this is really what I want to discuss. OK, improvisation, as a word means one thing, as a style of music means something totally different. I'm not interested in styles. I'm an improviser, which means every time I sit down I don't know what I'm going to do. I have no idea what it's going to sound like. I don't care one tiny bit about the style of music called 'improv', in fact I think most of the people who play 'improv' are liars at this point. They get up there and think they have to play like what 'improv' is supposed to sound like. They're liars. I have no interest whatsoever in playing an already established sound. I view improvisation as standing as near to the spark of creation as humanly possible. That's the goal, that's what I'm really trying to do. Total improvisation, pure improvisation, no heads no chord charts. I want to be free to go in any direction. If I want to set up a structure, or play a melody, I can, but I do it in real time. I feel like it's the next step after jazz to completely step out on the limb, no net. But I have to do it in a way that is honest to who I am. Everything I've ever heard is in me in some way or another and might appear in some guise or another. But there is also the possibility of playing something new because to play along with creation, in real time, is to play beyond yourself. You try and get beyond your own judgement so that things can happen. We always follow inspiration. Inspiration leads the way and we always follow. But if we can get right up to it, then anything can happen. To me, nothing is more exciting than playing something for the first time. That's the rush right there. So in analyzing that I realized that every form of music known to man was initially improvised. After that they remembered or

wrote it down and it might have become a style or genre, but initially it was improvised.

I'm focused on finding something new. And I think the new cannot be thought into existence. It's somewhere beyond thought, out there. Not everything has not been discovered yet. The real breakthrough for me was getting to the point where I saw my life as improvisation. I went past just thinking about music or writing all the way down to my actual life, my whole person. I thought that for me to really find out what improvisation was I had to put myself in a position, physically, where improvisation was the only option. I bought a one way ticket to an island in the Pacific with \$500 in my pocket and ended up staying a year and leaving with \$10,000. I think that was the frontier I needed to cross, mentally, spiritually, in order to truly understand what I wanted to do with music. I wanted to play within the flow of life. Every situation has a flow, an energy, and maybe the best we can do is ride with that. So now I live and it's like dipping into a stream for water the way I play or the way I write. I try not to think too hard or judge too harshly what comes out. I try and allow it to happen rather than forcing it. And I believe that if we can exist in that place we'll never run out of ideas, never run out of energy.

Q: Obviously the connection between jazz and improvisation must be an influence, how do you view your work in relation to jazz or blues?

MC: I'm a Bluesman. It took me a long time to reach that conclusion because I wanted to come up with a new term to better describe what I do, but at the same time I wanted to acknowledge an origin. The blues is arguably the original artform in the transition from the African to the black American. The blues as emotional zone, not the style it has become with the twelve bars or whatever, but the blues as emotional landscape. I want to feel that connection to the past and at the same time illustrate the evolution into a futurism. I want to connect and draw from the source. Jazz represented the advanced form of the black American musician. That's where I recognized the combination of mental, physical and spiritual brilliance. It was the domain of philosophers and intellectuals and arcane equations. It had the confidence and poise and elitism that inspires me to reach as deeply as I can. That's the beginning of my interest in improvisation. But maybe where I feel differently from other musicians who loved these musics is the fact that I never actually wanted to play them as a form. I didn't see the point in trying to go back in time. I related to the necessity of finding a way that was unique to my experience as a human and, obviously, as a black American. And if I did that honestly then I knew I wouldn't be betraying the masters but, in fact, doing exactly what they would need me to do. I knew that I would be able to sit down with Braxton and the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Butch Morris and we'd be speaking the same language. Black genius is forever progressing. There is a line all the way through Robert Johnson to Charlie Parker to Grandmaster Flash to Goldie. So I had to listen to everything, read everything and then develop my own approach to sound as a logical progression from that essence. As Cecil Taylor said, each man is an academy. You have to create a language out of all the strands of genius that have come before, mixed with your own unique experience. So I just brought it all to the table and never looked back.

Q: What about Africa? Obviously the blues is not the beginning, it too evolved out of something.

MC: Absolutely, but for my intents and purposes I choose to concentrate on what I am. It's not to deny any connection to Africa or Europe or the connections we will make with Africa and Europe in the future, it's just that I want to make sure we have a clear, individual, original voice to bring to the summit as Americans. We can't come trying to be things that we're not. We do have a tradition, albeit a young one. We do have a pantheon of masters. America was and is a petri dish where all kinds of mutations occur. Africans who survived slavery and absorbed the European influences became a new species. Now, at this remove we are no longer Africans, we are Americans. It always amuses me to see these bohemian

American blacks with the beads and kente cloth talking about kings and queens when they've never even been to Africa. The temptation is strong to want to identify with antiquity but I think it's much more important and exciting to not only come to grips with what we are, but to exacerbate and revel in this new opportunity. To turn our pain into genius, which is what the blues truly is.

Q: What about your feelings on issues of race? Do you feel any sense of responsibility to black culture?

MC: I do and I'll tell you why. In America, no matter where I go, I'm black, period. There is no discussion or acceptance of me as being Norwegian and German, that is not yet possible, even though they are as much a part of me as African. I'd rather not waste a bunch of time and energy trying to convince everyone I'm white too. When I look around and see who owns all of this stuff, I mean, who owns jazz, blues, hip hop, who owns the magazines, the books, the films, I realize that we do not control the means of communication. It's astonishing to see that even now, with all the tools we have at our disposal, we still don't have a black owned creative music magazine. And I'm talking creative music, not pop or hip hop. Of course that's just the tip of the iceberg. Someone has to be willing to say that shit is off, totally unbalanced and destructive. Someone has to ask the black creative sector what they plan on doing. I mean, it's great to have other people put up the money and put out your books and records but it's much bigger than the money. We have got to build. We have got to invest. We have to plant the seeds and be patient so that this next phase grows properly and strong. We have to allow for constructive criticism. We have to strive to make brilliant work. So I have to think about the future of a brilliant race. I see that I am part of the

I see that I am part of the next generation of black people in America, being mixed and trying to amplify the strongest aspects of both cultures within myself.

next generation of black people in America, being mixed and trying to amplify the strongest aspects of both cultures within myself. This has nothing to do with reverse racism or superior versus inferior or anything like that, I love my mom, you know. But I see what those who are in control choose to show. We're being represented by other cultures who may or may not care to see black Americans being progressive. Why would they want that? Why would they actively encourage us to own our means of communication? That would be taking a huge chunk out of their pockets. How much money do you think these people are making off of what we do? And not just money, but how much control are these people effecting? We have to be the ones showing that our lineage is one of the strongest on the planet, capable of infinite variety and depth. I feel very excited because the world hasn't seen what the black American can really do yet. It's coming and I have a role to play, absolutely.

Q: Are you a hip hop fan?

MC: I think alot about the producers, people like *RZA*, *DJ Premier*, and the *Bomb Squad*.

*I feel that hip hop, like jazz and blues, is done.
It's a form now and as soon as you step outside of the parameters of
that form then it's something else. I want the something else now.
The world needs the something else now.
I want the stuff you can't pin down.*

I don't care about them not playing instruments or not knowing theory, they don't need it. I say stick with your MPC and Technics and go all the way deep to the point where you can do anything. We need them to be virtuosos. We also need them to not worry about this thing called hip hop. When they start breaking through that frontier you won't have to worry about is it hip hop, it will be great art which exists outside of any category. Here's the thing, I feel that hip hop, like jazz and blues, is done. It's a form now and as soon as you step outside of the parameters of that form, then it's something else. I want the

something else now. The world needs the something else now.
I want the stuff you can't pin down.

What really is difficult for me is looking out at my generation and seeing all of this referencing. So much of the art now is just taking the surface concerns of the past and putting a new face on it. I don't see anyone saying that we have to push into some new territory now, or that what we're doing isn't good enough. Where is that confidence and brashness that says we're gonna do something the world has never seen before? I'm so tired of this hero worship. You can't say that you want to make music with the same relevancy and intensity as Miles, Mozart, Monk, or Ellington, without people thinking you're an egomaniac. It's shameful. The world is changing so incredibly right now and we need the music and art to lead the way. We have to reach deep down to pull up some truths because the world desperately needs it. We need to accept the responsibility of being positive and dedicated to finding new methods.

Q: How can you remedy this situation, and if you can't, then how do you function?

MC: I've had to think long and hard about this, spent many years wishing for others to appear, wishing for some sort of community, wishing for some elder to come and anoint me. Then, I reached a point where there were only two options; I could keep going like I was, lamenting all of the things that were not there or I could embrace the situation and turn it to my advantage. I'd say this really hit me about a year ago. I began to see the positive aspects of going alone. I didn't have to wait around for people, rely on people who maybe didn't care as much as I did about something, and the most important part, I could move faster. I sometimes feel like I'm building a new machine now. I'm drawing in as much information as I can and keeping all the parts that resonate and discarding the rest. I'm a scavenger. I'm leaner, I'm not dragging around all sorts of unnecessary baggage. I used to go around being excited about something I was reading or hearing and try to turn others on to it. Now I just keep my mouth closed and let that energy circulate inside of me, I just let it simmer and boil and it drives me. I love seeing the connections between all these different elements and I love not having to convince anyone that they're there. I'm the proof whether something fits or not. How I move through the world is proof of what I'm feeling. I'm getting faster, clearer, stronger. My eyes are open and I'm trying to give everything a chance. It's funny though, the age I'm at, the age my peers are at, this is the transition. I'm seeing how other people are evolving and I'm not saying anything. I'm seeing the work they're making, seeing what they talk about. I've let everyone go, I've stopped trying to carry people.

Q: What are your views on academia? Do you think it's possible to learn creativity in a classroom?

MC: Well, firstly, I've not had the experience of attending a four year college so my opinions are based on my observation of others. I think we've seen a shift in thought relating to higher education. We've also seen a shift in thought about what art is and how you go about doing it. Having technique now is almost laughed at. Having ideas is the cutting edge. Duchamp kicked the door down and Warhol decorated the room. Now, I love both Duchamp and Warhol and Yoko Ono and Fluxus, but the fallout is that nobody knows what is actually good anymore. So if there is no standard and no technique, well, I guess anyone can do it. So the schools have become flooded with people who would obviously rather be sipping wine at their gallery opening than sitting behind a desk selling insurance. Fine, I understand that, but it doesn't mean that's really what they should be doing. On the music side I see all these examples of kids being lavished and rewarded for adhering to a particular dogma. They are the ones in line for the grants and teaching posts. Calcification is being held up as the proper standard. So, at this moment, the work of the university is just muddying up the waters. They need the tuitions, the teachers need jobs, so nobody says anything. I wonder how many professors weed out 90% of their students because they can see that art is really not

for them? I don't think it happens too often. Art is life. Art is the experience of being alive translated into another form. So how do you teach someone about life by sitting inside a classroom? You can't. The best you can do is tell the student that they won't be finding it within those four walls. But then enrollment drops, people start losing money and jobs etc. So my opinion is no, you cannot teach creativity in a classroom.

Q: So how does the information get handed down if there are no universities?

MC: It has to become less formal, less financial, more personal. It's not the concept of teacher and student that feels wrong but the system in place for the student and teacher to actually interact. The need is for elite instruction, think tanks, spaces where one can go to discuss and access information, getting people to be the best they can be. Black people have always had to use informal methods for instruction. During the heyday of jazz you just went down to 42nd street and all the masters were right there. If you wanted to sit in or learn you had to be ready to get your head cut. From what I've heard if you didn't have it together you'd get tossed out of the club. These days nobody is being honest because of the fear of not moving up the ladder of the grant world or the gig world or the press. Or maybe it was someone's living room over drinks and a smoke. Discussions were being had, there was some building going on. Now those spaces don't seem to exist, or at least I don't know where they are if they do. The masters are all spread out across the planet teaching at the universities. I don't think this is an accident. I happen to think it's very smart to keep the black geniuses from getting in the same room. Who knows what might happen if they got together? Maybe they'd figure out a way to get their own money together to build a situation independent of present day schooling. Sounds quite dangerous indeed. So offer them decent wages and the prestige of being real university professors and split them up. That kind of situation they can just walk into, the structure is already in place. But to build something from the ground up takes time. And there may be a period of invisibility, even derision. We have to be willing and able to forego the gratification of institutional accolades. We have to be willing to go underground for a time. Not only am I willing to do that, but I'm proposing it. For starters I say we get together some of the great minds and just have dinner. It's that simple. Forget composing those impressive salvos and manifestoes and just have some dinner. No pressure, no agenda, just dinner and drinks.

Q: Dinner and drinks? That's it?

A: That's all I ask. If we could have Cecil Taylor, Outtara Watts, Suzan Lori Parks, Naomi Klein, Butch Morris, Randy Moss, bell hooks, the Bomb Squad, Samuel Delany, Kara Walker, Michael Jordan, RZA, Anthony Braxton, Kodwo Eshun, Tiger Woods, Greg Tate, Adrian Piper, Tricky, Amiri Baraka, Venus Williams, Meshell Ndegeocello, George Lewis, Serena Williams, Wole Soyinka, Goldie, Zadie Smith, Vernon Reid, Rob Swift etc. get together with some of the younger generation for dinner, I think everything would naturally go to the next level. Let me make this clear, I'm not just conceptualizing, I'm serious. I'm putting the call out right here for this to actually happen, and I know just the spot. It's time for the standards to be set back up to the level of being able to change the planet. Standards that can inspire one to action. To show by example what it means to operate on that level. To illustrate the difference between greatness and fashion.

The time has come for a black methodology, a black technology.

The time has come for a black methodology, a black technology. Cecil talked about that in the seventies and I don't know of anyone who has picked up the thread. I'm not talking about a model of exclusion, you know, we don't need another era of black nationalism, we must collaborate with the entire world, but we also must understand who we are and be in control of our productions. Pan-Africanism has fallen from our

discussions and our actions and it needs to be back at the forefront.
There are other ways of doing things and I think the future will be about
the combined efforts of all African peoples worldwide, in solidarity and
open to the influences of other cultures to build Africa and explore space
and beyond.

CONTACT: craft@roughamericana.com

<http://www.roughamericana.com/>

NEW RELEASE

MORGAN CRAFT “THE SILVER BULLET”

Free full length album download.
(Clinical Archives Release) 2009.

<http://clinicalarchives.blogspot.com/2009/10/ca324-morgan-craft-silver-bullet.html>

Q: So the name of the album is "The Silver Bullet", what exactly are you trying to say with that?

MC: I mean it to work on a couple levels. Obviously the most common use for silver bullets comes from folklore, against werewolves, witches, or certain monsters. In looking around today at the music scene it's hard not to feel it's being propped up and run by real life monsters. The endless barrage of negativity and regression, the focus on style over substance, laziness, misinformation, theft, greed, lies, all point to a certain kind of evil. So, metaphorically, the only way to stop them is with a silver bullet. But my bullet / album doesn't kill, it enters the body through the ear and acts as a catalyst for realignment and mutation. As a more general metaphor, the term silver bullet refers to any straightforward solution perceived to have extreme effectiveness. The phrase typically appears with an expectation that some new technology or practice will easily cure a major prevailing problem.

Q: So you're taking it upon yourself to illustrate another approach?

MC: Someone has to do it. I don't see anybody else stepping up and taking the heat. I don't see anybody cutting against the grain with anything revolutionary. I feel like it's time to lay the cards out on the table and really walk the walk. I've talked so much about my generation and its lacks and now I'm really trying to move beyond all the complaining. I feel that criticism really is very weak in terms of actually effecting some kind of change. What is needed are musicians willing to show and prove that a new direction can and does exist. I'm interested in art and artists that inspire humanity to think, feel, and act on the highest possible level for the good of the planet. I'm interested in innovation and expansion. I think we're at the end of a particular cycle that has allowed so much negativity to flourish.

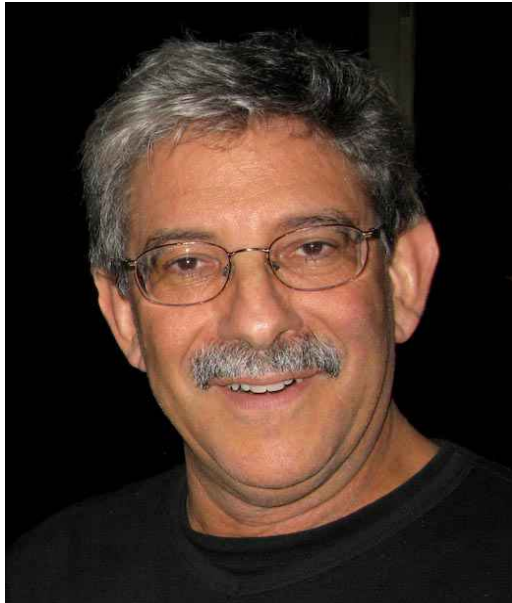
Q: The title also brings to mind the Lone Ranger. He used silver bullets in his gun.

MC: (laughs) That's true, I never thought of that. I can't say I ever watched the show but the premise is definitely one I would agree with. I think the world is ready for a new hero. And I don't mean this penchant for identifying with comic books and naming yourself after one of the characters, or being a politician waving words around and posing as something heroic. I mean a real flesh and blood hero going out to fight injustice. Yeah, I think it's time for that.

<http://www.roughamericana.com>

craft@roughamericana.com

Improvisation as a Tool for Investigating Reality



by Stephen Nachmanovitch

2008

Improvisation is a tool for investigating reality.

What is the reality we are investigating?

Let me approach that question sideways through a couple of stories.

When I was writing *Free Play*, I was visiting a dear friend of mine, Michael Stulbarg, who was a pulmonologist in San Francisco, what we used to call a left-brain person, very logical and scientific. I asked him, as a doctor, what does improvisation and creativity mean to you? Without hesitation, he said, it means actually seeing the patient who's in front of you, rather than a textbook case or a diagnosis you've been taught. Any doctor, who is in practice, and who really practices their practice, knows that each person is absolutely individual and cannot be completely categorized except in terms of their own situation.

To see clearly that uniqueness, to see another human being, is a remarkable thing. And that ability is at the core of improvisation. Many people have the idea that improvisation means acting wild and crazy or behaving without pattern or procedure. They tend to associate improvisation with randomness. Of course everyone knows it's the opposite.

Our experience as improvisers is one of direct encounter with what is directly in front of our noses, whatever that may be: our partners when we're improvising together, the unconscious, the room that we're in, the people that we're playing for or with. In improvisation, we get as close as we possibly can to the data of experience.

Improvisation is similar in my mind to the 19th Century scientific practice of natural history which was Gregory Bateson's home territory. In natural history, you aren't compounding a

carefully controlled situation as in experimental science or fully scored music, you're looking at what you find in nature, and trying to deal with it, and react to it, and understand it. In natural history one approaches a complex system whose multifarious interactions are impossible to specify in advance, coming to that encounter with no fixed expectations, but with a disciplined capacity to observe and react, a capacity which has been honed by experience.

I often play with partners in chamber improvisation. A friend of mine who runs a children's theater in Charlottesville came to one of our concerts. In our concerts, there's no discussion, no planning of any kind before we go on stage--other than preparing the equipment, tuning up, and the agreement to listen to each other completely and produce out of that a coherent and coordinated music. My friend said that as she was watching us on stage, that she never had seen adults listen to each other so intently.

Out of the pure and complete act of listening and nothing else, you can produce coordinated, organized music; which is nevertheless from that time and place and from that moment.

I teach at chamber music festivals where people normally come together to play Mozart, Shostakovich, and so forth. We do improv workshops where groups, usually quartets, concertize together, after perhaps three days of rehearsal. One of the things that's remarkable in these people's experience -- people who are classically trained, who have had that lifetime experience of having the music stand as a barrier between them and the audience, between them and their fellow players -- is the power that they experience of being there with an audience with nothing in between.

I'm speaking not just of a music stand as a physical barrier, but also the virtual music stand of a memorized score. To have nothing at all between you and your fellow players, you and your audience, is such a remarkable experience. From that experience of encountering each other, comes all of what I'm calling the natural history data of music. All that observation, all that feeling, all of the millions of nerve impulses that come in and out every second as you encounter other people, as you encounter a situation, as I encountered a few minutes ago when I was playing here.

At one of these chamber music workshops, the faculty would evaluate the participants' playing, not for the purpose of giving them grades, but for the purpose of placing them next year with compatible people and playable scores. The people with the more basic skills would be given Mozart and Haydn, and the people with more developed skills would get the Brahms and the early 20th Century material, and the most advanced skills would be given the brand new contemporary scores, which are often complex looking, difficult to follow, and require a lot of experience to play.

There was one fellow who was a fantastic improviser. He was a violinist with excellent control of his instrument, he could make all kinds of weird, whispery, wonderful 21st century sounds, microtonal, sliding, jumping and bouncing, doing all the wonderful things that you can do with a violin. He was minutely responsive to his partners. I thought he was fantastic. Then to my great surprise, we go to the faculty meeting, and all the other faculty members gave this guy what you might call a C grade, saying he was only advanced enough to play Haydn and Mozart, because what they were looking at were his reading skills. And indeed, his reading skills were at that level. What I got to experience through his improvisations were his musical skills, which is a whole different ball of wax. It's so fascinating to be able to encounter real musicianship, real skill. We've all met people who are naive musicians, not well trained, that can get incredible sounds out of instruments, out of their voices. Where do we place that on a scale of musicianship?

The other day I was in the grocery store and ran into a little girl I know, Vlera, who is two years old. Her parents are from Kosovo, so she's half an English-speaking environment and half in an Albanian-speaking environment. When she talks to strangers, she can only say one word, which is "Nah." We had the most wonderful conversation in "Nah": Nahhhh in

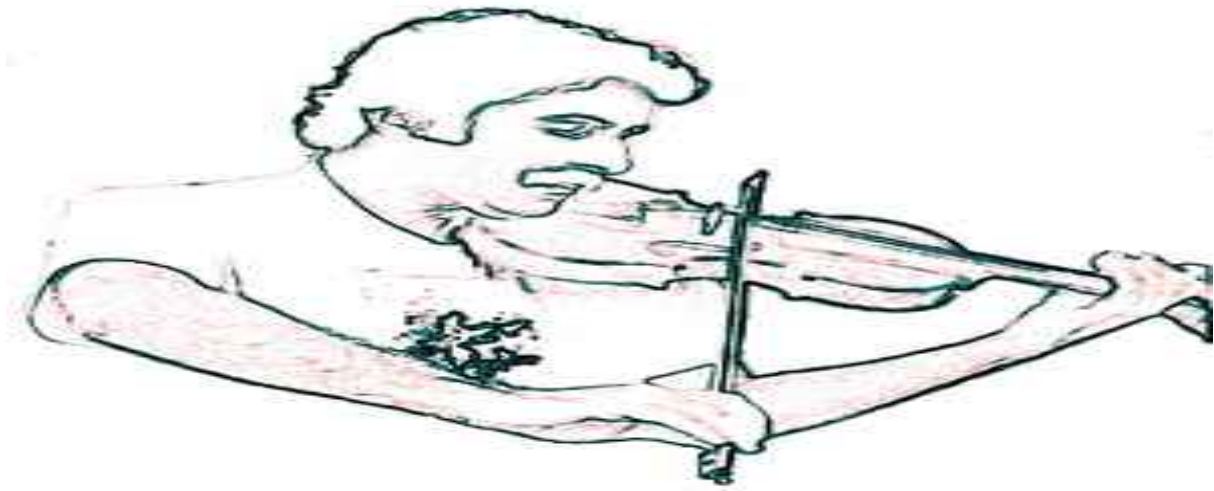
innumerable tones and timings and colors of expression, Nah! Na? Na.....h passed back and forth between the two of us for many minutes. I realized that with a one-word vocabulary, naaaaaah, you can come up with an infinite variety of expression. And she could do it because she was completely uninhibitedly wired into her nervous system and to her surroundings and her feelings of shyness and fear and boldness and playfulness and flight and fight. All these expressions and moods and explorations of relationship were swirling around inside that single syllable which we tossed back and forth to each other.

I sometimes teach a workshop called "Gibberish, the Universal Language." When I work with chamber musicians, we often spend the first hour doing gibberish pieces--put the instrument down, put your years of training and skill away, and lets just make noise together and learn to listen to each other completely. Listening is everything. Pauline Oliveros, for decades, has been talking about deep listening as the essence of the work that we do.

Sometimes I am invited to theater or poetry departments where people don't have musical skills and they want me to do musical things with the people, so I do this gibberish work. I've found some fascinating things working with trained improv actors who are already good improvisers, professional, marvelous actors, they're used to doing theater improv. For many people, the idea of theater improv is associated with comedy. There is a reason for that. If somebody on stage performs something intense or serious, or that brings tears to your eyes, the performer doesn't see that. If the performer does something that makes you laugh, the performer gets that immediate feedback, and there's a kind of Skinnerian learning going on-- You're funny and the audience laughs and you respond by being funny some more-- you stay in the groove of comedy.

Now in classical music, you're not allowed to laugh during the performance, so that doesn't happen. If laughing were allowed, then classical musicians would be funnier too. The interesting thing that I've discovered when I had actors working in gibberish, rather than words, they could still be funny, but in addition they suddenly had a huge range of other and more serious emotions available to them. It is quite a strange thing, but they would do these pieces with three or four words like chuchki and jajamene, and slap their body parts, and bang the floor, and they were able to get into very profound riffs: you can never say what it's about in a literal sense, but primal pieces about life and death and love and loss and basic human relationships and tragedy and all kinds of things that improv actors usually don't ccover in their work. Somehow nonsense and gibberish gives them permission to do that. Because it is so unlabeled , they are able to go anywhere with it.

Language labels things for us. Jean Piaget wrote: "Intelligence organizes the world by organizing itself." The problem with language is that it turns the world into things. Because of the incredible convenience of language, we hypnotize ourselves into believing the reality of linguistic symbols, especially nouns. Gregory Bateson, following the inspiration of Anatol Holt, used to say that he wanted to get a bumper sticker that would say, "Stamp out Nouns." Nouns, representing so-called persons, places, things, and ideas, are a marvelous convenience to allow us to get up and to move our mouth parts at each other and communicate, but they don't represent anything except for a very provisional and temporary kind of reality.



These musical instruments: they are made of wood, the wood came from forests, and the forests came from particular ecological conditions, from the rain, from the earth. The characteristics of the wood are related to who cut the wood down, and in what way and how it was cured before it was made into an instrument. And eventually in the fullness of time, these instruments will turn into debris of some sort. In Buddhism, they call this the "emptiness of inherent existence." When Westerners hear that term, "emptiness," they tend to get alarmed, because they think that emptiness means nihilism, as if things don't exist. The operative word in that phrase is "inherent." Look at this red guitar cable connecting my red violin to the amplifier in the podium over there: like the violin, it was made by people; the plastic and metal and materials came from some place; the whole history of consciousness of all the people whose inventiveness and whose labor that went into making a guitar cord is here! So, we're looking at an immense complex of interrelated activity, which is only temporarily present in the form of that "thing." Obviously, if I step over that cable in the wrong way, I can trip over it—it is eminently real—emptiness is not the same thing as nihilism. Thich Nhat Hanh substitutes for the word emptiness, a word which is more precisely communicative: inter-being. The wood of the instrument, the trees, the people who made it, the people who cultivated the trees, the people who work in the factories who made the strings and everything else, all of those inter-are with the violin.

There is a wonderful third century text from China called Hsi K'ang's Poetical Essay on the Lute. It is an essay about how to play the ch'in, the Chinese lute. He spends about half of his text about tree cultivation and ecology and what goes on in the forest and how you choose the trees and that sort of thing. For him, the proper study of a musician is ecology. The ecology of the forest, but also the social ecology, the intellectual ecology. When your instrument is not built and if you're doing a free improvisation, there are tunes that are rattling around in your head from the commercial you heard on the radio this morning, or some piece of music that you've always loved, or some type of ethnic feeling that's very present in your life, all of those things coexist with the present moment of your real time artistic creation, and they are available for you to draw upon. Emptiness means emptiness of inherent existence. The guitar cord or the improvisation doesn't exist by itself, but it coexists, it inter-is, with absolutely everything in the universe. And because "absolutely everything in the universe" is information, that is why you can get up with nothing up your sleeves, and no plans and no stated intentions and improvise music with each other, because you have an infinite amount of information to draw upon that's already present and already with you, from the four and a half billion years of organic evolution of your own body to the evolution of all of our cultures, and all of our friends' cultures and everything that we have come in contact with.

So if we go back to our initial question of improvisation as a tool for investigating reality and ask what is the reality that is being investigated, that reality is inter-being. Inter-being, then, is the opposite of thing-ness. Some of you have probably read the work of Christopher Small, who does this wonderful deconstruction of the concert hall environment. He plays with

the whole notion of how all these works have become works. How the process of the composer's mind and the process of the playing of the instrument and the process of its reception of the audience have turned these things into works as if they were solid objects, and then the history of art or of music is the study of those objects as though they had thingness. All of us can sit in a concert hall and love hearing Beethoven, and we can also sit in a concert hall and just imagine if Beethoven himself walked into the sanctimonious atmosphere and saw the kind of straitjacket that he'd been placed in. He was a man who was prone to have temper tantrums so you can imagine what he would have said. It wouldn't be quite as bad as what Jesus might say if he could come back and see what's being said and done in his name, but it would have still been pretty bad!

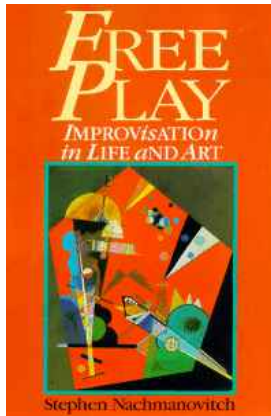
Here is another entry point into the reality which we investigate with improv. I recently met an extraordinary man named Colin Lee. He is a music therapist in Toronto, originally from England. He has written a book called *Music at the Edge*. It's the chronicle of his music therapy journey with an AIDS patient who was also a skilled pianist. I haven't had too much to do with the world of music therapy and frankly haven't known that much about it. My wife, a hospice and palliative care doctor, once described to me a couple of people who come to the hospice units and play the harp for the patients. It sounds a little horrifying to me; if I was dying, do I really want harp music with all the cultural connotations that has in Western civilization? But then I encountered the work of Colin Lee, and I found out what music therapy is about. What he does is improvisation with patients. He was mostly working in hospice/palliative care with lots of AIDS and cancer patients. He was working with people who were in states of great terror-knowing that they were going to die soon. He would improvise together with them. He had some patients who could play musical instruments and others that couldn't and they banged on drums, thumpers, and shakers and percussion instruments, the piano keyboard. He improvised with them, allowing the music to reflect incredible pain, anxiety, peacefulness, or reconciliation. The whole gamut of extreme emotions were made available through this musical conversation which could take place at a speed and with an articulateness that no one could have with a verbal therapist, because language is simply too slow and clumsy. The amount of information that gets passed back and forth in each second of music is simply beyond what ordinary language can do. For this reason, we can use music as a tool to investigate the emotional reality of people in the greatest distress. That reality, even though it's hard to talk about, is something that you come face to face with, quite intimately through hearing the sounds the patient plays. Since many of the patients look very bad, or very odd, if we were presented with video recordings we would be affected by the visual appearances and not listen as clearly to the emotional content that is being expressed. When we have the audio-only content of a CD, we have the opportunity to get much more intimate with the patients' feelings.

Colin played me a tape of an improv that he did with a seven year old Down's Syndrome boy who had never spoken an articulate word, and at the end of the session of playing the piano with Colin, said, "Bye." Some of the people in these situations look funny, look bad - if you see them you get a certain impression of who they are, but if you hear the sound they make, then you get a very different impression. You are going directly into a relationship with them, and experiencing their thoughts and their emotions in real time.

What's magical is that all improvisers can participate in this kind of work. There are so many styles and ways of doing things, in every single one of the many styles is an immediacy and complexity of real time improvisation, real time information that's transported by sound waves, that cannot come any other way.

There is a South African word, Ubuntu, which is the same thing as inter-being. Desmond Tutu brought it into currency in the West and it is the opposite of Descartes. Descartes is famous amongst other things for saying, "I think, therefore I am." Ubuntu means "I have my being through your having your being. Ubuntu is the territory that we get into as we do our improvisational explorations.

excerpt from Keynote Address -- International Society for Improvised Music
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
1 December 2006



Stephen Nachmanovitch is the author of FREE PLAY,
a book about the inner sources of spontaneous creation.

Improvisation as a Form of Cultural Recreation



by LaDonna Smith
2009

I propose, that in our society, the musician could once again rise as proponent and leader of primal ritual celebration, using music, as a tool of cultural recreation. Accepting the premise that all people have their own unique voices and expressions, translate that into a common musical gift, which can realized in all people.

Recreational music improvisation is facilitated by musical leadership, whether it is by shaman, jazz musician, contemporary music educator, neighborhood band leader, or common social initiation.

The role of music in our lives must become more immediate. It must become more a part of our own bio-rhythms, and daily rituals. Just like going to the gym, or having lunch or sleep, or a moment's meditation. What a gift of time it would give us, to sing every day. To transform time into singing. To play everyday, like children. Maintaining the

playfulness, the curious, the imaginative, the qualities that are so rich and natural to us in our childhood. Must we grow up only to work, and never to play? A sad condition for the human spirit, indeed.

The role of music education, then, must shift, to accommodate the education of all people, not just to train music specialists. As well, it must even move beyond the oral tradition of learning songs, the native songs of each culture, which have traditionally, "in the old days" been passed down as folk songs, but unfortunately, today, are actually being lost. Musical education must evolve beyond traditional technical training on musical instruments, and the historic approach to styles and contemporary composition practices which alienate and exclude a large portion of our society. Music practice could, on the other hand, be inclusive of every child and person, and encourage participation on wide spread scale as a recreational form, just as certain sports have become the "national past-time." What is needed is a massive re-education of the population, bringing a heightened awareness of making music as personal leisure, and that in our society, this too, is personal medicine.

We must, as practitioners and educators, bring a new focus to the frontlines of our own practice. As leaders in our field, we must encourage those with no musical experience outside turning a radio knob or pressing a cd player to participate together, to feel what it feels like when one "plays". To break the barriers of education, and instead, create exchange between those persons, and the privileged ones with formal musical backgrounds and professional experience. We must encourage the novice to experiment. We must give them permission, and equip them with a philosophy that brings comfort AND curiosity. Beginning with the given factor that first, there is silence, second there is noise, and third, from those two points, will rise a musical order. And, that "order" will be determined, by the musical genes of the individual. What I am calling the "musical genes" is the pre-disposition of music which is inherent in every human being as a result of their cultural background, their education and experience, (or lack of it), and their exposure. Their physical abilities to move, and their acquired skills of listening and responding are no different in this case, than in the case of learning to "catch a ball" or learning to ski. Basically, if we encourage group music, with a wide-angle philosophy of what that is, we open new doors for a "cultural recreation".

Because of the mass media and musical marketing practices in our society, this could be a difficult undertaking. People are barraged and dulled by aggressiveness of the popular music market. Particularly, the practices of commercial radio and television networks, which seize profits from pushing the market directions through advertising short-term hits and trends, so that many people see music as a hat-rack, upon which to hang their emotional complaints... as in songs which lament lost lovers, or elevate sexual frustration. (ie. "I want you" etc.) Of course, then on the other hand, there is the Christian music market, which also uses music to hang the hats of their texts of belief and hope. And there are the Public Radio Stations, which in my area of the U.S. (down South in Alabama), still insists that classical music is it for high art music. A little jazz is done for 4 hours on weekends to satisfy the popular culture, and powdermilk biscuits are part of the course of comedy and "mom and pop" mentality, seeping in as a "old timey" folk music... But what of the music which is being currently created in our time? Even on NPR, to hear this is a rare event! And still, this is all available from loudspeakers, airwaves, electronic medium, without the need of a real musical instrument in the room. I like to compare it to a frozen dinner! Ah, the corporate kitchen has supplied us with a ready made frozen dinner to eat. But where did it come from?

Still, there is a need for human beings to return to the practice of music as a personal expression-- of emotion, thought, and condition of the soul. This can be done through

the genesis of a creative music-making, based on sounding energies; not just using the conventional backdrops of pop-music as a vehicle for verbalized conditions, such as song. The act of engaging in free improvisation will become a liberator, an emancipator, for many people to touch into their emotional lives in a non-verbal and a non-judgmental way. We must introduce this healthy way of life.

From a basic understanding that noise is the music of the Universe, that noise is good, that noise is normal, that silence is the other side of noise, the direct inverse of noise. That which is full becomes empty. Consider it as though we have a full vase of water (noise). We pour some water from the vase, taking some of the elements out of the noise. We hold these elements. Separated from the noise, they are art. We drink from it and are nourished. On the other hand, we visit the empty vase, the Silence. We sit with it. We listen. We hear. From Silence rise out the inner voices, which talk to us. We listen. We pour water back into the vase. It is art, it is music, and it is the expression of our own lives. Our lives become full again. Who is not "too busy"? We live constantly between the Noise and the Silence. It is what we do with our lives in between which brings the order, or the "music" that we make.

I have been speaking in a metaphorical language, using the term "music" to mean, "our lives". But are not our lives a form of music? With this awareness, shall we not enjoy life? Shall we not pick up our tools and till our gardens? Shall we not from either Noise or Silence, make music?

Back to cultural recreation. Let us use this opportunity to re-evaluate the condition of music in our society. Let us not look only to our Shamans, the composers, the jazz musicians, the pop-stars, or even the media, and the market, for our music. Let us look within ourselves. As an educator, I would take the responsibility to lead and encourage every human being to make their own music. And one of best ways I can think of, is the practice of musical improvisation. Anybody can do it. Everyone can participate. For some, indeed, for many, it may take some introduction. But if we can continue the dialog with our children, our peers, and the ordinary people in our audiences, we can make a "collective music," which will bring about more healing in the world than a century of psychoanalysts and shrinks. What people need is the non-verbal connections to their inner selves. They need access to their places of Silence and their Noise, and the tools to make music from these two extreme conditions. Musicians all share this magic. We must make this gift available to everyone.

O.K., it's very simple. Every human being should have a musical instrument. Of course, we all have a musical instrument, as we were born with our voices and our bodies. We use our voices. We use our bodies, everyday. We use them to communicate. We use them to talk, to cry, to scream, to laugh, to express our emotions. We Sing. We use our voices to carry the melodies of our poetry. But we also have at our fingertips, tools. A musical instrument is a tool to carry us even further in our discovery process to the realm of non-verbal musical exchanges. If you will, indulge me in another simple metaphor. We can plow our fields with our hands. But we have learned to use hoes, picks, and shovels. Earth-movers, such as tillers, ditch-witches, steam shovels, and caterpillars. And, we've even moved mountains by detonating dynamite! We learned to count on our fingers. But we also learned to employ the abacus, the adding machine, then modern calculators, and now computers to facilitate our mathematical computations and projections. Why then, does not everyone play also a musical instrument?

I suppose it is because we have not emphasized enough in our society, music as a recreational form. We can make sounds together, born from either noise or silence. We can create a form of cultural recreation, which will bring pleasure, joy, and fulfillment. It

is within the range of everyone, or anyone, to participate.

Our concepts of musical instruments also must be challenged. Of course, we have the classical instruments of our cultures. We now have the high-tech, the experimental, and the yet undiscovered. Perhaps the first inquiry should be, "How can I make a sound"? What will I use? And furthermore, make expression from the sound. Collective engagement with others making sounds from our choice of instruments, whether it is a violin, a saxophone, a blade of grass, or a metal pot or pan, creates then a collective sound. It is much like having a palette of colors from which to paint. A bucket of noise from which we can draw out the waters of our imaginations... To shape and mold our "found sounds" into cups of substance, something we not only recognize as our own, but that we enjoy, and which belongs to us. The pleasure of it all is the point.

Look around you. See the myriad of possibilities. What would you choose to play if you could imagine yourself singing through a musical tool? It is as personal as a favorite color, a food preference, or a favorite breed of dog. It's as available as your favorite color or food preference. It is really just an awareness. So, let's take up our musical instruments, and proceed into the noise and the silence with fearless, but playful abandon to discover what is within. And in the process of this journey, we will be given insights, guide-posts, and new territories to discover. What could be more fun? What kind of recreation is this? This, indeed, would be a cultural "re-creation" of our Society. . .

Some Suggestions for Playing

1. Create a piece from silence. Start sparsely by humming. Be sure to hear the silence before making a sound. Stay with it a while. Find an ending.
2. Create a piece from Noise. Just go at it. Don't worry about a thing...Watch as you hear it organizing itself.
3. Create a piece using "voiceless" mouth and body techniques. Remember that some sound is visual. Build on the natural flow of rhythms and/or space. Just notice where it goes.
4. INWARD/OUTWARD One group starts with long blending tones or horizontal attitude. Other individuals make exceptions, with specific, possibly short interruptive sounds. See what happens.
5. If there are instruments, check them out "See what they will do" or see what they do for you.

The only requirement is to have respect for the process.

These are just some simple rules: as in a game to play.

Improvisatory compositions are created by awareness and willingness to play. Game rules help create structures, awareness recognizes these structures. The things to develop recognition for are shapes, colors, beginnings, middles or developments, endings, ambience, and resonance.

The personal process can be going inward, or outwardly playing; but either way relating to the external dimensions.

The attitude is to enjoy!

The Words of The Master Improviser

Part One

By Dave Fox

2008

The package arrived in August of 1989. My uncle “Bill” (William Fox) a wheat farmer from Kansas had died earlier that year. What got him was intestinal cancer – damn us Foxes and our cursed stomach problems.

I had not attended his funeral, because it occurred in April. April is too busy a month for a musician to take off just because a relative you hardly know dies, especially if they live half-way across the country. From what I had heard about him, he was a hard-working man who occasionally played some jazz piano. My parents had always wanted me to go out and meet him, since I was a jazz pianist, but I never found the time.

So I was surprised when I received the parcel post from Carla, his one remaining daughter, that Friday morning in the mail. There was a note inside it that said, “I think your Uncle Bill would have liked for you to have this. Love, Cousin Carla.” And under the note was a self-bound leather book, with no title on the front. I opened it up, and on the first page I read the following words, handwritten in large print:

June, 1938

My Time with the

Master Improviser

When I read those words, my thoughts flashed back to a memory of a childhood piano lesson with my first jazz piano teacher, an old man with thick white hair known to everyone as Lou. Lou lived in Siler City, just up the road from our home in Asheboro, North Carolina. I remembered what he said to me at one particular weekly meeting. He pulled me aside before my parents came in the door of his small frame-house and told me in his soft but gruff voice, “You should try to find out about someone I’ve heard rumors of, someone called the master improviser. He was the spiritual influence on the all of the great improvisers of the 20th century. But, unfortunately, his existence has never been proved. Nonetheless, there are supposed to be some records of people - young aspiring improvisers who visited with him and took some notes of their encounters with him. If you could find a copy of these notes, it will answer a lot of your questions about improvisation.” And then he gave me a pack of chocolate drops like he always did at the end of my lesson, and the next thing I knew my parents had come in, paid him, and we were headed back to Greensboro. I quickly forgot about what he said, thinking he was a crazy old man who happened to know how to play Satin Doll, but that’s about all he was good for.

But I remembered him and what he said as I stared at the dusty collection of papers that I held in my hands. Later that day, gazing at the manuscript, I thought to myself, “Could it be that my teacher, who had taught me how to play a minor seventh chord in the keys of C and D, was right – that there really was a master improviser, and that, my uncle actually met him and, even harder to believe, kept a record of his encounter with him?” It was too much to take in. I put the book down and walked outside to think about this in the hot southern summer air. The pine trees in the distance reflected the setting sun from their tops – an orangey color that you only see when you look at North Carolina pines as they meet a North Carolina sky. I looked at the wash of brilliant and subdued colors, and poured myself a drink, a cool glass of Pinot Grigio.

As I tasted the dry liquid, I told myself that there was no way any of the story could be true. No, I laughed to myself, this was probably some strange co-incidence, and my uncle was probably just as weird as my piano teacher. I laughed again, this time out loud, as I put the manuscript on the kitchen table. Then I left for a gig I had that night at the Speakeasy in Winston Salem. As I drove down Business I-40, I noticed the moon over the horizon. It was a half-moon, hanging upside down as if it were a cup. Or was it right-side up?

When I returned home, around 1:00 the next morning, I poured myself another glass of Pinot and settled down on the back porch. As the morning air breezed the screen, fresh from the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains fifty miles to the East, I could not contain myself any longer. I opened up the book and started reading.

The Book of Improvisation:

Recollections of My Meeting with the Master Improviser

By William Fox

Foreward

The Master Improviser lived in the clouds high atop a mountain in a distant land, and was accessible only after many days of long and arduous journey. Several musicians, in the 1920's and 1930's undertook the journey to visit and stay with the Master Improviser for a few short weeks during the summer – the only time he was said to entertain strangers. I was lucky enough to spend two summers with him, 1934 and 1935. I kept a journal of my time with him. Years later I have taken on the task of compiling these notes so that I can now present them to the interested reader in this present form.

The questions are from either myself or one of my colleagues during the adventure. The answers are the words of the Master Improviser.

I, William Fox of Lucas, Kansas, in this the tenth month of the year 1938, do hereby swear that the following events occurred.

On our first day in the land of our destination (it was June of 1934) our guide led us up to the top of a high mountain and showed where we could camp. We were told that the Master Improviser would meet with us the following day. In the morning, we awoke and, after breakfast we had our first meeting with the Master Improviser. We introduced ourselves, and then he disappeared. We spent the rest of the day fixing up our campsite until he returned just before sundown for dinner. Afterward, we gathered in a circle in a nearby cave, and he encouraged us to ask him questions. After a time, one of us finally spoke.-

Student: Master Improviser, what is improvisation?

Master Improviser: Improvisation is nothing more, and nothing less, than the act of making things

up.

Student: That's all? Don't I have to know about chords, chord changes, melodic tendencies, and things like that before I can make things up?

Master Improviser: The more you know about chords, chord changes, and melodic tendencies, then the more things you will be able to make up, especially with regards to chords, chord changes, and melodic tendencies. But one can still make things up without knowing anything about these. Remember this - chords, chord changes, and melodic tendencies are not improvisation – they are merely chords, chord changes and melodic tendencies. If you had asked me, What are some of the things musicians need to know to make music?, then I would have answered, Chords, chord changes, and melodic tendencies are some of the things musicians need to know to make music. But, you didn't ask me that – you asked me, What is improvisation? And, I gave you the answer – Improvisation is making things up.

Student: Oh.

-The Master Improviser then proceeded to build and light a small fire, for it was getting cold as darkness descended on the mountain-top.-

Student: Master Improviser, what is the best way for someone to get started improvising?

Master Improviser: There are many ways, but all of them eventually lead to the mastering of the two irrefutable principles of process. You see, improvisation is a process, and master improvisers are those who have mastered the art of process.

Student: There are two irrefutable rules of process? I have never heard that before.

Master Improviser: You have never heard it because most people do not take the time to think about it – but when they do think about it, most agree that it is true – in fact, it is as plain as the nose on your face.

Student: Oh.

Master Improviser: Would you like to know what they are?

Student: Yes I would – what are the two irrefutable rules of process?

Master Improviser: The first irrefutable rule of process is expressed in the equation $a=s$.

Student: $a=s$? What does this mean?

Master Improviser: It means *anything equals something*.

Student: Oh.

Student: Master improviser, what do you mean when you say *anything equals something*?

Master Improviser: The equation $a=s$ simply means that, whenever you do anything, then you have something.

Student: You mean that if I want to improvise, all I have to do is ...

Master Improviser: Anything.

Student: What is anything?

Master Improviser: That is a very profound question. Let me answer with a demonstration. Here is an instrument called a ruhja. (He reached behind some rocks and pulled out a small, wooden instrument with various holes at the end of what looked like piano keys. Sound was produced by blowing on a hole and depressing a key at the same time.) William, would one of you be so kind as to play a note.? (With some hesitation I reached over and pressed down one of the keys, the third key from the left, while I gently blew into the hole at the end of the key. A flute-like sound was emitted - it sounded to me like a Bb.)

Student: OK – so I played a Bb. So, this is an anything?

Master Improviser: Yes, it's an anything – but, more importantly, it is also a something, because $a=s$.

Student: I'm not sure I understand.

Master Improviser: It is simple: If one wants to improvise, which is defined as making things up, the first thing one has to do is to make something up. Anything will do, because anything equals something. In this case, you played a note, the note you call Bb. Bb is simply an anything. Since anything equals something, you now have something to work with. You could have done anything else, ranging from playing any other notes, any combination of notes, or you could have hit the ruhja on the side with your fist. Or, you could have done nothing, which is a special something called silence. Any of those acts, those anythings, would have resulted in something. This is what is meant when I say $a=s$.

Since an improvisation is definitely something, then doing anything, which equals something, will always give you an improvisation – all of this is because of the truth contained in that one simple equation, $a=s$.

Students (at the same time): Oh.

Student: OK – so, I've played a note, an anything, and that equals something. And, that something is an improvisation, right? Is that where this is leading?

Master Improviser: Well, if you want your improvisation to consist of that one note you just played, Bb, then I suppose you could say, yes, that anything (the note Bb) is an improvisation (something.)

But what I said was actually this: That if one wants to improvise, the first thing they have to do is to make something up. In other words, $a=s$ is used as a method for *commencing an improvisation* – that alone does not make an improvisation – unless, you want your improvisation to consist of that one note you played, Bb. Which, by the way, is a perfectly fine thing to do. As improvisations go, I'd say that your playing of the Bb was probably one of the most flawlessly executed improvisation of all time. Bravo.

Student: (drawing closer to the fire to keep warm) Then what else should you do after that? To make an improvisation I mean?

Master Improviser: An improvisation will occur when one follows the first irrefutable law of process with the second irrefutable law of process.

Student: Oh.

Student: Master improviser?

Master Improviser: Yes?

Student: What is the second irrefutable law of process?

Master Improviser: I'm not sure you are ready to know that just yet.

-The fire died down as we slept. The next morning, as we broke camp, and all through the next day as we hiked up and down mountain trails, no-one asked about the second irrefutable law of process. This went on for three days. Finally, after the sun set on the fourth day, after we had made a soup from the plants we had picked during the day, the Master Improviser suddenly walked over to a small creek flowing down the mountainside. Without any beckoning, we knew we were supposed to follow him.-

Master Improviser: I will now tell you what the second irrefutable law of process is. This law, when it follows the first law, opens up the door to that realm where all master improvisers live. It is a dangerous world, and that is why so few are there. I didn't think any of you were ready for this, but your silence has convinced me that you are not immature, and can handle this knowledge.

-We dare not say anything, since he had just complimented us on our silence. It was as if we knew that our silence was something that was necessary for learning. I remembered the Master Improviser saying something to us about silence a few days before, when he was explaining to us the importance of $a=s$. It was years later that I realized the genius of his teaching methods – he had taught us the importance of silence simply by his own silence.-

Master Improviser: The second irrefutable law of process states that: *Everything is followed by Something* – or, if you will, $e=s$.

Student: Which means that ...

Master Improviser: Whenever you do *anything*, then you have *something*. ($a=s$.) That *something*, and this is true every time, which is why it is called an *everything* in the second law, is always followed by *something else*.

Student: But, what is this something that follows everything?

Master Improviser: Well, referring back to the first law –

Student: I get it! It could be anything! It could be another pitch, the same note, another action such as stamping my feet – it could be literally anything. Even silence!! Doing *Anything* gets you *Something*, and *Everything* you get (as a result of doing *Anything*) must be followed by *Something* else – and that something could be *Anything*!

Master Improviser: And therefore, improvisation is simply doing something and following that with something else – over and over again.

$$a=s, \text{ and } e=s.$$

And, therefore,

a, or anything + e, or everything, = s; and, s = an improvisation, since
an improvisation, if it is anything, is definitely something.

Or, if you wish,

Improvisation is not only something, it is also anything and everything.

As we sat and contemplated what had just been said, a light but steady rain began to fall. After a few moments, the Master Improviser stood up and turned his back to us. He then made himself a bed from some loose grass he found and lay down to sleep. Just before falling asleep he turned to me and uttered words that sent a cold chill up my back: -

Master Improviser: And now William, you see why it is that not all are able to improvise. Some people, many people if truth be known, are afraid of life – they fear finding out about the reality of their being, unless it concerns their possessions or their status in society. But if you asked them about something besides their possessions or their status, like their soul, eternity, what kinds of things do they dream about, and so on, they have no idea what to say. And, why should they? They are afraid of such things. Why on earth would they bother with something like improvisation, a process that causes you to come face to face with anything and everything?

I fell asleep contemplating these haunting words. When I awoke we hiked down the mountain and headed towards a small stand of trees, where the Master Improviser said we would find some more good mushrooms for eating.-

My neighbor's dog began to bark, like it always did at 3:00 in the morning. I looked at my watch – 3:00 in the morning! Good grief! I closed the book, finished my wine and headed off to bed. This was too surreal for me to comprehend. As I listened to the 60-cycle hum of my room air-conditioner in my modest Piedmont, North Carolina brick house, I replayed the days events: I had just read some pages from a book, a book that had come in the mail only hours before; a book from some cousin I played with in the wheat fields of Kansas when I was, I don't know, maybe six years old? And, this book was supposedly written by an uncle whom I never personally met, and it was about him as a young man on some high mountain in God-knows-where, and he's talking to some bearded guy (I didn't know if he had a beard or not, but it sure sounded like he did) about improvisation? Was this crazy, or what?

And, to top it off, as if all of that wasn't enough to make my mind go haywire, one thought repeatedly came to mind as I tossed and turned myself to sleep. All I could think to myself was, "My uncle ate mushrooms?"



What Might the New Language Be?

by Mario Rechtern

2008

The following article was written by Mario Rechtern. It comprised the liner notes for our new recording on Ayler Records called U

*This poetic commentary by **Mario Rechtern**, was contributed by **Eric Zinman**, and speaks about improvisation as social activism, observing how birds find their way together and work out disputes and such. It reveals insight on his personal experiences and you may find it interesting in that light. It is referring to the work, created together on the recording annotated below. The following poetic essay asks the question: What might NEW LANGUAGE be??*

what might new language be? coming out of these emotional ponds lakes and seas spreading out and merging into each other- not a communication in the sense of pure conversation, discourse and interaction to the point of the said but rather grasping the sensuality and sensual expressions of the said by emotional shares and sensual contributions to the said , grasping the energies and shipping the vessel on them, waves surfing, drowning and getting rescued by drums or cello or piano and back on board through space and friendships among the travelers speaking, feeling and creating new words, feelings and thoughts from the moment as necessary to describe flight position and desire to break even with the needed distinction of the status quo, to know who and where we are today...tomorrow is another day another journey. and as lautreamont describes the flight of the starlets(wild geese?) in the chants de maldoror : there is no leadership but the impulse of any bird / musician to the center of the group to find out about its whereabouts and their days and instincts, the howabouts, thus performing at a remarkable speed towards a yet invisible target within headwiseaimed infinities and endless spaces. yet they know precisely where to go since they carry their target just themselves within their inborn desires and instincts, just within their cells and nervefibres. so they move on through the autumn skies a flesh among mountains clouds, lands and seas until they finally arrive exactly where no one ever would have been able to anticipate but on the spot! across the sea year by year.....

“all music is just noise unless you break the code.”

So all language might just be babel, nonsense, noise - even schizophrenia unless you broke it's code into a new language, which you can understand since you did break its code; once a secret language in a coded expression, coded for example by

the speeds of these wild geese or starlets above .. to their destiny, - communicating constantly within their level of energy and instincts towards their where-to-go-about, just yielding to the center and moving along within this weird desire inside of each...

so, new language also might mean to shift the ordinary language into languages of moaning, suffering, of laughter, of quarrels of the bitchy housewives into codes of birdsongs and their modifications.

here exists definitely the term new language: animals like birds, whales, etc., that live in group societies, and species- modify their languages with new codes to take a distance from their group that has become too crowded, or so, thus becoming a different society with all kinds of needed modifications en suite. new languages are created, new behaviors, new talents, new codes to decode reality and live it as such...I observed in my country place my playing sopranino has modified the singing of the birds

around and this again has modified my playing - a new language started and a new species of birds, making the group, living around and acting so, once I am there and play. i can hear it by their articulation....

same in Italy with seagulls, though more on an emotional level: once i play the sky comes alive and emotions hit among the birds (no, they don't fight- they just get excited and transmit and develop new languages...and enjoy it): The new language seagull laboratory....evident..

people might think me crazy but its true.

proof: whales. one knows about their songs and their modifications, once felt themselves within environmental or social changes of the seas or the groups . new groups, new identities are generated with different behaviors , different itineraries and a different poetry of communication...

NEW LANGUAGE COLLABORATIVE. (CD)

Eric Zinman piano

Syd Smart drums

Mario Rechtern reeds

Glynis Lomon cello

<http://www.ayler.com>

THE TROUBLE WITH MUSIC

MAT CALLAHAN

-book review

publication date March 2005

2009

The Trouble with Music by Mat Callahan is the fiercest new exposition of the state of current practices around music, and the social impact of music vs. the current music industry in the history of world music. Written by an author who has been involved in the music industry for over 30 years as musician, engineer, manager, and producer, this book is articulate, passionate, and cleansing, presenting a powerful case for disassociation with the processed music of money & media moguls, and through attentive discrimination, reclaiming the muse in music.

The underlying theme is in contention of the modern condition that has prevailed since the advent of the corporate commercialization of music into a commodity, and of it's devastating results on the unifying spirit that music represents, not as revolt or complaint, but as fact. Callahan loudly exposes truth from untruth, the conformity that has taken hold within the world of free market, free music and radio/media that would seek to dictate modern tendencies in music, robbing humanity of the authentic experience of musical creation, performance, and perception. At one time, music had the power to raise consciousness as a medium of physical, emotional, and mental expression, of conflict, of intimacy, as a gift of experience from an artist's soul. That is now debased into a massive regression through the marketing of music as product, of channelling mass direction and funneling creativity into a corporate criteria of "stars created", "units sold", and largely media-driven synthetic "success-stories", conversely robbing the artist and the public of the very soul and fundamental relationship with music.

Callahan probes the actuality of the question of mastery, accomplishment, and human effort, making vivid arguments and pointing to numerous examples of mastery from that of the authentic artists, as we have known them to the mastery of those contributing to the corruption of the function of music in our society. Significantly, he also points to the heightened meaning of authentic performance and mastery in music, the sharing of a personal relationship through music, a more fundamental experience accessing truth through thought, creativity, and artistic awareness; not the pursuit of fame, the spoiling of ego, the more replicable sales fodder, created & styled by advertisements, hot-lights, fast dance, fashion, make-overs and booty; the hype, and hoorah that would seek to disguise the truth of music into a bastard product to a public that cannot recognize that this is the music that has been cloned, not "discovered", and delivered to their ever more short attention and starved appetite for entertainment, where brighter & louder is better, "must have" and "in your face now" -not the music, but the products, the videos, the mugs, the t-shirts, the stuff surrounding the "star". The "star" not the talented, recognised by the populace, but the pick of the pushers pushing the production to the entertained.

As an improviser, composer, performer, theorist and artist, I find *The Trouble*

with Music to be utterly fascinating and true. But more than that, it is inspiring. If this can't inspire musicians to take back their own world, nothing can.

I sit with the silence, and with the value of being a real human being, with human experience, breathing into the reality of the many hours logged-in of listening, practice, study, and meditation that goes into my personal musical background and capability. The potential that is there all the time, to create a true expression, to deliver the expression in the moment that it is created, for my own soul study, with an openness to share with others in a performance or a casual moment of unselfconsciousness sharing.

What Matt Calahan has pointed out has caused me to be thoughtful in my own conviction not to saturate the market with repetitious CD recordings of myself in my moment, but to aspire to create with a true honesty to the sacred potential and limitations of each moment of musical sound and direction, and allow the muse of the subconscious music to be my guide.

This is nothing that the world market would or should have anything to do with. It is mine. It is an expression of my unique being here on this earth. It is no more or less than the beauty of the 5 pointed leaf that would fall at the end of it's season. To those who are in the network of my path, they may have the opportunity of witnessing this great crossing of consciousness. It is however, private and personal, and I would ask that they would behold this fragile world of my music in respect. That they could appreciate would mean that mastery is attained, in successful opening of minds and hearts, and in the communication that can exist through the inherent meaning already existent in the vibration of the music and the arrangement of the sounds (and or words) associated with the moment of observation. This deep listening experience is the true muse. The ability to open one's awareness to the medium of the heart. Music is an expression of the Great Mystery (some call it Life) that can be contained in a sound, a cluster, a group of frogs toning, a voice ringing, singing language thought forms, or a vibrating instrument, or collective of human beings combining their sounds & musical gestures to create a work of art, an art form of music that belongs only to them, that cannot be bought or sold as a product, but that is as intimate and personal as a prayer.

Reading *The Trouble With Music* inspires me to reclaim this rich heritage of our ancestors. To make music is a way to connect with our own history and our collective and personal spirituality. It is an activity which when shared among friends, family, and others, has the power to bring people closer together in shared experience and in the collective study of ourselves and the world contained in the music.

"Timeless music is humanity, a generic multitude, not the individual or any One. It is the connection between people, the Commons that is called forth by the herald of music for which music, itself, exists".

The "timelessness" that Callahan points out is truly a social process that is always evolving many, and "all at once". I invite you to read this book, to search your soul, to discard that which you don't need, and join together in reclaiming music for our collective Commons.

LaDonna Smith

contact: josh@AKPRESS.ORG

Improvisation as Prayer...

LaDonna Smith

2004

Beginning in silence, holding only an instrument, listening within, observing a point for departure into the inner world of sudden creative expression, tapping the well to draw out a first sound in a musical exploration, that sound which then will be observed faithfully, and which then move with a life of it's own into the next, and the next, growing naturally along an undetermined path, to be noticed as music becomes...

We follow this movement, listening creates a connection as we observe ourselves responding, and allowing the flow of motion, which becomes melody, rhythm, and harmony that reveals itself at the moment of creation, in the act of doing, listening and responding, allowing the inner workings of the Soul to be made manifest. Drawing new images, from the subconscious. Where do the images come from? Emotion and Sound-Vibrating Life and sustaining force... Who are we, but the vessel of transmission, the intermediary physician of this living sound, which shapes itself into a music, which becomes from our mediation. And then, what is the Source of this movement?

Improvisation is a part of life. It is a time of crossing. Crossing the threshold of known and unknown. It is truly the instantaneous momentary points of departure based on memoirs of experience and the void of the unknown. Whether we are listening for and through our inner voice, for the words we need, or the directions to do, or whether we are so tuned that our allowance of the given activity transcends beyond conscious direction, to psychic automatism, sudden acumen, or emotional abandon, we find the "flow" and observe the "direction".

We are challenged to accelerate, withdraw, or proceed beyond our own creative expectations, to discover that which is given to us, that we give over to, that we channel to new levels, and observe without self-judgment. We don't know exactly where or how we will manage. When we can't know a given outcome, but must respond, then we improvise and therefore experience. When we are living in the moment, we are improvising our life.

I would like to invite you to consider the nature of a very natural form of music, which is called "Free Improvised Music." You may find it interesting to realize that this music is very akin to prayer. It begins with a point of departure, in which no one is certain what will happen, just as our lives begin each and every day. We wake up and proceed with faith that the walk, we are about to embark upon, will take us on the path to higher consciousness and service to a better world. Even on ordinary days, there is always a miracle, waiting to be realized.

Sometimes they are small positive outcomes to mundane situations, but they are only real if they are noticed and felt. It can be as simple as a moment of sharing, or feeling the wonder of changing seasons, or noticing sentiments. Or the act of slowing down enough to notice that you are growing older, and that autumn is once again upon us, with it's smells and sounds, it's clear blue days...to be enjoyed. Never mind the "gotta's" (gotta do this and gotta do that), but in noticing the feeling of the air at the point of the intake of your breathing... This submissive awareness is a form of prayer.

Prayer is a time of introspection. It is the time when we search our heart for feelings, for needs, for communication with the Spirit, however we define it. We sit in silence and listen deeply.

*If we are fervent, we come away feeling a renewed connection with our world of Spirit, a gentle knowing,
and even a subtle change in our heart.*

Music, as the emotional transformation of Sound, has the power to move us to this point of connection. Just the act of simply listening and remaining aware and open to it's message, comprehending it's movement, in melody, harmony, and vibration can give us the same inspiration as drinking in the colors of the sunset upon the clouds while feeling a gentle breeze upon our skin and so we Silently listen...to the Spirit in music, to the awesome Sounds of our environment, and marvel at the Sound of Life all around us.

As a form of music, Free Improvisation is an art form. It is the art of taking the first sound uttered, and riding that sound through, while noticing a musical landscape that is forming, as we are attentive to its creation. It is the act of allowing the creation to manifest through our willingness to participate, whether as music maker, or as listener, by following the process. It is an opportunity for that which arrives from our subconscious to show us what is real and imaginary. It challenges a new kind of space. It does not just represent linear time from beginning to end, but it is manifesting real space with great depth, between the beginning and the end. It is a time of expansive listening, to both the music that is being received, but also to the subconscious thoughts and feelings that come up during that process of listening... It is the willingness to give over to another frame of reference. Of being guided, of being an instrument of guidance, and allowing the creative force to speak through us. It is not about a finished product, so much as it is about the process. The process of actively improvising music is a letting go of the standard passing of time, and receiving an expanded awareness of energy, manifested in sound, movement, and perception.

I invite you to participate, as improvisatory music is as natural and spontaneous as the cry of a baby. Begin with your subconscious mind, your ears, & your own voice. Just notice your first Sound, and allow its continuation. Connect with it, as the Sound continues to grow and explore it's own territory. Take note of the feeling of it. See it as a touching in with the Soul, with the Spirit of the Universe, with the Creator of all Creation, in harmony with the great Unknown, and with others like yourself, who have given a moment of time to vibrate in the pool of frequencies that make up the Universal Movement which is known as Life. As you deepen in your musical practice, draw in your awareness and watch as you begin to improvise and respond, magnifying the musical moment into a metaphor for the events of the world.

~LaDonna Smith

(revised, October 6, 2004)



[Home](#) - [Texts](#) - [Galleries](#) - [Other media](#) - [Links](#) - [Contact](#)

FOR WILD MUSIC

Johannes Bergmark

1993

Wilderness and wildness is alien to most of what is called democracy.

Mankind can never again live in harmony with nature if it is going to go on using representatives acting according to their own head, i.e.

Conventionalized heritage, after having bought passive acceptance of the people by advertizing their personality image, whereupon they institute laws, unfailingly making a minority (in many cases a majority) of the people to criminals. The functions of this society affects the psyches and consciousnesses of the people, so this society restrains a wild relationship to wildness, to wilderness and nature. We are brought up to plain survival, burdened with guilt by the law and its way of thinking.

Man needs a wild consensus – a wild spirit of community, not prescribed by law – to respect and appreciate nature in psyche as well as in consciousness, and for the possibility of incorporating chance (the natural unpredicted – "lucky" as well as "unlucky") in life as a potentially creative element, where not one way of living together is the alternative to the present order, but a continuous, restless and pleasurable examining curiosity. The music representing these has its undeniable roots in the wild rhythms existing in an incessant polyrhythm in the whole system of the body: heart; lungs; intestines; muscles; sensory and motoric nerve

functions, including the little isolated part called thinking. The marvellous mysteries of the body have never been prescribed by law – their perfection are in their own inner conflict of aggressive aging.

This intuitive insight seems to presuppose the abolishment of civilized sounds – industrial and commercial – belonging to the personality market or the usual economy, e.g. Noise from big industries, highways, sirens from emergency vehicles and robbery alarms, commercials on ether medias and videos, sports commentaries, roaring sports fanatics, muzak, public-keeping continuous pop music on radios, whining tax payers with a greedy mood, sellers with standardized service-mindedness, shallow entertainers with microphones, politicians, beeping digital watches and computer games, the majority of the heard rock'n'roll which has become the fastest way of musically driving the body impulse and the desire for happiness into the fold of conformity and stupidity.

If these are deprived of their civilized functions, though, even these sounds can, in exceptional cases, be reconquered by wild music, which in this way gives them a different content and consequently makes them turn against the misery that created them in the first place. But the main road must be to re-establish music as a sound of nature, which does not oppose sounds of nature as "art music" does per definition; to make music a behaviour of the species, an engaged occupation to develop curiosity and the body rhythms (dance impulse) together.

The structure of the city: size, density, the impossibility to recognize people or make friends with all the unknown passers-by, industrialism and commercialism, make them to places where the encounter between music and nature is marginalized to the point of extinction. The few musicians that can survive in some form of wildness are continuously threatened to be smashed by the commercialization of personality: rock'n'roll or avant-garde clown are the choices. In a natural state (wild state) every 50th person should be of the shamanistic magnitude that Cecil Taylor is.

Now, such unique and rare beings must travel round the world to meet those wanting to participate in this wildness (free beauty) instead of being able to have their closest people within walking distance. The whole global political system contributes in the attack against wildness and its liberation in all animal species in the attack against wildness and its liberation in all animal species and humans, and until further notice, therefore, an international exchange of ideas and results, such as visits, writings and

recordings are of great value as proofs of the potentials of wildness and as support and inspiration for its spreading.

Wildness in music already seems to spread more and more – as in other areas of human life. Young musicians can today be brought up with free music as their own heritage. The first Western attempts to create a non-tonal music (or rather post-tonal or anti-tonal, since these break with a certain period of functional harmonics (now yet another form prevails), which was preceded by another, linear, tonality) have since long ceased to be needed to train the ears to experiment – the ear in more and more cases does not demand anymore agreed outer rhythms and keys in order to become curious.

In spite of new sampling techniques, the will to explore new and unusual objects' musical potential seems to provide the greatest possible expression with the least possible need of technique – and thus also for the largest amount of people available, all around the planet. In these objects the physical contact and the intellectual understanding are as big as possible, while this is so only in extreme cases with electronic and digital equipment. The deprofessionalization and humour (closeness to the listener) of the musician can often be greater if the technique is simpler.

The need for music of man is wild and human. It will not disappear just because all sounds are formally possible and acceptable. Music is the human possibility to, through sounds, enter and communicate with the total (wild) organism of man, in worlds in nature which are not – or less – accessible – which broadens the understanding of the magical, animate, in nature and in our human friends. At the same time dance and curiosity, as pleasure-processes, are themselves both research and results, wonder and discovery, way and end, rest, preparation and completion.

I hit an object. The object begins to call out. I begin to call out. Beings pay attention. What is said? Who is speaking? Will I answer? One cranes one's neck. I raise my eyes. Do you wish to come over here?

(From The Man on the Street #2 1993, also published in [The Improvisor.](#))

Improvised Music in Denmark



by Kresten Osgood

2008

Since the 50's Denmark has had a reputation as a country with a strong love for jazz. Artists like Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz, Oscar Pettiford, Ben Webster and Kenny Drew lived and worked in Copenhagen and helped educate that generation of players (many of whom are still around and are generously sharing their knowledge with the younger generation). At this time there were also some hip club owners who presented the avant-garde and people like Albert Ayler were able to play here before they were discovered in the U.S. Cecil Taylor played in Copenhagen for two weeks straight with Sunny Murray and Jimmy Lyons in 1962. This exposure to the new thing started the first wave of improvised music in Denmark, but it was only a hand full of people. Mainstream was still the main thing being played in the clubs.

The late 60's 70's and 80's a lot of stuff happened which could take up dozens of pages, but I am not an expert, plus this article is dedicated to the present. However, some names should be mentioned and then you, distinguished reader, can google them yourself. John Tchicai, Morten Carlsen, Pierre Dørge, Jesper Zeuthen, Hasse Poulsen, Hugh Steinmetz, Dane T. S. Hawk (or T.S. Høeg and Cockpit music), Peter Friis-Nielsen, Marilyn Mazur, P.O. Jørgens, Lotte Anker, Lars Juul, Christer Irgens Møller, Kristian Kühl, Carl Bergstrøm Nielsen, and Claus Bøye are among those that should be mentioned, and there are probably a few that I missed..



John Tchicai Jacob Anderskov Jacob Dineson Dane T.S. Hawk Kasper Tranberg



Carl Bergstrom-Nielsen

A major change happened in the mid 90's. A new generation of players hit the scene. They challenged the general stylistic perception which was prominent at the time. Back then everybody belonged to a camp. Either you were a bebop/modern jazz player and was concerned with playing beautifully over the changes and keeping the form and all that or you were an improviser, thinking conceptually or abstract with little interest in the past. I am sure you realise that this is a generalisation and that there were a few people who saw things differently, but this was the overall vibe of the scene (which interestingly enough reminds me of the scene in New York in 2006). These players brought a new urgency to the music. They were burning on stage, playing with tremendous power and conviction. Their inspiration came from every kind of music. They were listening to country music, rock, african music, singer songwriters, jazz... everything. These players are in their late 30's today and they are in my opinion the main reason that the scene in Denmark is like it is. Two bands should be mentioned here: "When Granny Sleeps" and "Once Around the Park".



Ned Ferme, Mads Hyne, Nicolaj Munch-Hansen, Jeppe Gramm

And here are some names of players from that 90's wave: Mads Hyhne, Anders Mogensen, Nils Davidsen, Michael Finding, Rune Funch, Niclas Knudsen, Anders Christensen, Kasper Tranberg, Jacob Dinesen. These people are very much active today and are still part of the center of the improvised scene...

The Danish scene is mostly what's going on in Copenhagen, but a few smaller cities such as Odense, Ålborg, and Århus also have their improvisors. However, most of these people are also mixing with the Copenhagen scene. What is great about the music community in Denmark is that it is so small that everybody is in contact with each other. It doesn't mean that everybody plays with each other, but you know each other's music and it is easy to make a statement that people will hear. Because everything is so small, what goes on at a few jam sessions is extremely important and particularly one club became the center of everything from around 1998 until 2003. The place was called The Children's Theater and was located in Christiania (which is a kind of renegade part of Copenhagen occupied by some hippies since the early 70's... that was probably the shortest version of that story ever written). The atmosphere in this club was very free and they weren't trying to make any money. The club opened around 9pm and closed after 6am. everybody who played music and their friends got free drinks and there was no control over what was going on on stage at all. Sometimes somebody from Greenland would get up and start singing songs from his native country accompanied by some dogs fighting and a guy on violin sitting in the audience. Other times the great bebop guitarist Doug Raney would be playing standards and often the great Luther Thomas would improvise on his horn for hours and anybody could join in. Sometimes these sessions would turn into something that reminded me of pagan rituals, with people in the audience dancing abstract while you were playing, other times it would be more like a sing-a-long and at times concentrated listening.



Zeuthen, Friis, Mazur

Somehow all of this created a sound which united a lot of the younger players. The feeling that, in music, you had absolutely nothing to be afraid of and that a concert could go in any direction necessary, became the starting point for a lot of the young players who dominate the scene today. Within a year or two over 20 important young players emerged. Their music was totally different from the existing players and they set a new standard when it came to handling their careers. Almost all of them were writing their own material, leading several bands and bringing their own audience with them. Now it wasn't the jazz fans who went out and checked out the new players.... it was the new players who had a following of people who were into different bands and some of them just happened to be improvised music. The new generation is very present on the internet. Everybody has at least one homepage, a myspace and a mailing list. They also have a huge output of albums. The younger players weren't interested in getting a record label to put their stuff out, they just created their own labels and distributed their albums on the net or sold it to their fans from the stage. I know that this is probably the same all over the world. I am just describing it because it has made a huge difference on the scene in Denmark. There are more places to play, more interest in the musicians and at the same time better music being made. I get very happy when I think about it. I am going to name some of these players: Jacob Anderskov, Mark Solborg, Jacob Bro, Soren Kjaergaard, Stefan Pasborg, Jeppe Skovbakke, Jonas Westergaard, Maria Laurette Friis, Jonas Muller, Henrik Sundh, Gunnar Halle, Laura Toxværd, Peter Bruun, Jeppe Gram, Stephan Sieben, Simon Toldam, Anders Provis, Quarin Wiikstrøm, Joakim Froystein, Jesper Løvdal, Nikolaj Munch Hansen, Frida Asmussen, Niels Vincentz, Ned Ferm and many others.... all of these people are connected in each others bands and support each other.



Kreston Osgood Maria Laurett Fris Peter Bruun Pierre Dorge

An important factor on the scene in Denmark is ILK (Independent Label of Copenhagen). It was founded by 12 of the younger players in 2000 and now has around 20 members. It started because everybody got fed up with the established jazz labels and started to produce their own albums and create their own labels. A lot of these small labels were finally combined into ILK, which is a record label and a musicians collective. ILK has a huge output of recordings and is getting distributed in most of Europe and Japan... recently ILK has been able to secure a greater presence in the US. ILK is now distributed by Stateside and has a regular exposure in Downtown Music Gallery, Downbeat, Jazztimes, Signal to Noise, and Allabout Jazz (who recently did a label feature on ILK). The scene in Denmark is very much linked with parts of the New York scene. Artists like Herb Robertson, Tim Berne, Chuong Vu, Jim Black, Oliver Lake, Marilyn Crispell, Michael Blake, Gerald Cleaver, Mike Formanek, Craig Taborn, Ben Street, Thomas Morgan, Chris Speed, Chris Cheek, Marcus Rojas, Steven Bernstein, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Paul Motian, Andrew D'Angelo, Bill Frisell, and others collaborate with the younger Danish players and appear on Danish independent labels (ILK, but also others). Other ILK albums feature such artists as Dr. Lonnie Smith, Paul Bley, Andrew Cyrille, Ray Anderson and Ellery Eskelin.

If there is a common ground in the ILK collective it would be a desire to be absolutely free from the established labels. ILK records put out the music that the artist wants to release exclusively. There is no business perspective, only an artistic one. Most of the ILK artists are between 28 and 38 of age, and they have a strong audience following, generally between the ages of 20 and 45, a segment of the population who normally doesn't listen to improvised music, but may have been following a band since it started in the late nineties. Go to <http://www.ilkmusic.com/> to get an idea of the scope of ILK.

Soon, ILK will have existed in 10 years and inevitably a new and powerful underground has emerged since. ILK can no longer call itself the true underground of Denmark because a new generation is releasing bold quality music outside of ILK. There are several labels, but here I would like to mention the Yoyooy collective. Centered around 4 main artists: Andreas Führe, Anders Lauge Melgaard, Toke Theitsen and Johs. Lund. This collective has released a number of beautiful albums introducing a new level of cover art, a new strong sound, quite different from band to band, but always with a strong concept and sense of form and uncompromising music, topped with outstanding cover art and often on vinyl. Key bands are: Kirsten Ketsjer, Yoke & Yohs, Slütspürt, Fjernsyn Fjernsyn, Sumo Friends and Frisk Frugt, to name a few. What is interesting is that this new generation of players have also created its own audience which doesn't

necessarily consider itself a jazz audience. The Yoyooyoy artists have a very strong bond with other artists internationally, performing in the U.S and allover Europe, particularly in Berlin



Yoke and Yohs

So now you get an impression of the vibrant Copenhagen scene. I know that this article could potentially be much longer. I could talk unendingly about the importance of the Rhythmic Conservatory in Copenhagen (opening in 1986) which I consider to be the greatest place in the world to develop your own music. That school has been visited by anybody from Phil Woods, Lee Konitz, John Tchicai and Steve Swallow to Rosa Passos, Moses Molelekva, Arild Anderson, Han Benninck and Chris McGregor, and the list is endless. What makes the Conservatory in Copenhagen so unique is also that it collects the major talent pool of Denmark at the same place. In my own case, I came from a village called Ringkøbing where I was completely alone. When I was studying at the conservatory of Copenhagen I was devoted to the art of Frank Wright, Jimmy Lyons, Charles Gayle, Milford Graves, Glenn Spearman, Denis Charles, Horace Tapscott and Sirone and I actually had someone to talk to about it!! Pretty amazing for a country in the north with a population of approx. 5 million..

Denmark is beautiful even though our politics are despicable, the music created here is valuable. Welcome to the true music of Denmark!



all the best,

Kresten Osgood

<http://www.osgood.funky.dk/>

<http://www.ilkmusic.dk/>

“Changing Musical Ideas: Alabama Improv Co-op.”

Kenny Johnson

2004

Hopes to shock life into downtown created a skateboard park and projects along the riverfront. On the musical front, minds of local musician Jeff McLeod and New South Book Store have teamed to help the city live up to the bookstore's name.



The Alabama Improvisation Cooperative (started by McLeod) is a forum for musicians and non-musicians of all styles to experiment and improvise on standard and non-standard instruments. Existing now for 4 years, local musicians meet one Sunday a month to improvise. Encouraged by McLeod, musicians from neighboring Birmingham and Panama City, Florida, have traveled to Montgomery to join in with the co-op experience.

New South welcomes the musicians. “We're very happy to be doing it. We host meetings for the Montgomery Transportation Coalition, The Improv Co-op, a poetry reading group, and a writers' group,” Foster Dickson at New South says.

Based on The Sacred Garden, a similar co-op started in Iowa City, Iowa, by friends Ed and Susie Nehring. McLeod describes it this way: “The Iowa Improv Co-op has no rules. All we ask is that musicians of all skill levels are treated with equal respect and that there be no

smoking or drinking during the meeting. Other than that, it's wide open.

No sound or instrument, however non-traditional they may be, is taboo. I really wanted to have the same sort of openness with the Alabama Improv Co-op as Ed and Suzie brought to theirs."

The Alabama Co-op lives up to those ideas. The meetings resemble a relaxed musical lecture or discussion. Modern design, tiled floors and book-stuffed shelves of New South's main room provide the backdrop for a refreshing musical conversation, hopefully void of clichés or tired song structures, but still very inclusive.

"We have musicians on simple acoustic guitar all the way to homemade contraptions using contact microphones mounted in pieces of metal and large springs." McLeod says "If you wanted to come in and destroy a microphone with a Dremel tool while whistling Dixie backwards, that would be beautiful."

"The whole idea is for people to be able to come in and do something that they normally wouldn't, or to attempt things they normally wouldn't without someone leaning over shoulder and saying: 'you shouldn't be bowing that violin with a beer can full of dirt! That's not proper!' I *want* people to come in and bow that thing with that can!" McLeod says.

Some of the most interesting sounds at the Co-Op come from Scott Bazar from Panama City. Bazar plays a block of wood fitted with wire, large springs, metal rods, a can of Vienna Sausages, and a microphone. Sounds of thunderstorms and 1950s Sci-Fi movies lurch from the contraption.

The meetings are mostly free-form improvisation with some pieces having a loose structure suggested by a host. Banjo, acoustic and electric guitars, violin and percussion in a large circle execute those ideas, while folk art and books by regional authors look over the player's shoulders.

"There are moments of free improv, large group improvisation, sub-groups of instruments working within a provided format and even times where we pass the sound around from person to person. Anything goes . . . although we love having hosts who bring fresh ideas to the proceedings, " McLeod says.

For example the first meeting in September featured a piece dividing the room into two groups. One group locked into a rhythm with the other intent on destroying their concentration.

In November Craig Hultgren, a cellist for 20 years in the Birmingham Symphony and founder of Birmingham Improv, an annual festival of improvisatory arts, hosted the co-op.

“It's a very healthy experience to play, create sound and make noise, and everyone who was there participated. They got to do some playing and hear some stuff by other people. I also like the down-to-earth, unhyped quality of the meeting. Everyone was very genuine. There were some really new sounds and strategies that did open minds including my own.” Hultgren said.

As Montgomery, Alabama grows, hopefully an open-minded musical community will grow within it. “The potential and the interest is here. It's obvious--judging by the expanded attendance at the last two co-ops. I would hope that it would only grow,” McLeod says.

For more info email Jeff McLeod: jeff@soundandchaos.com

The Alabama Improvisation Cooperative (started by McLeod) is a forum for musicians and non-musicians of all styles to experiment and improvise on standard and non-standard instruments. Existing only a few months, and two meetings into the idea, musicians from Birmingham and Panama City, Florida, have traveled to Montgomery to improvise.

New South welcomes the musicians. “We're very happy to be doing it. We host meetings for the Montgomery Transportation Coalition, The Improv Co-op, a poetry reading group, and a writers' group,” Foster Dickson at New South says.

Based on a similar co-op started in Iowa City, Iowa, by friends Ed and Susie Nehring, McLeod describes it this way: “The Iowa Improv Co-op has no rules. All they ask is that musicians of all skill levels are treated with equal respect and that there be no smoking or drinking during the meeting. Other than that, it's wide open. No sound or instrument, however non-traditional they may be, is taboo. I really wanted to have the same sort of openness with the Alabama Improv Co-op as Ed and Suzie brought to theirs.”

The Alabama Co-op lives up to those ideas. The meetings resemble a relaxed musical lecture or discussion. Modern design, tiled floors and book-stuffed shelves of New South's main room provide the backdrop for a refreshing musical conversation once a month void of clichés or tired song structures, but still very inclusive.

"We have musicians on simple acoustic guitar all the way to homemade contraptions using contact microphones mounted in pieces of metal and large springs." McLeod says "If you wanted to come in and destroy a microphone with a Dremel tool while whistling Dixie backwards, that would be beautiful."

"The whole idea is for people to be able to come in and do something that they normally wouldn't, or to attempt things they normally wouldn't without someone leaning over shoulder and saying: 'you shouldn't be bowing that violin with a beer can full of dirt! That's not proper!' I *want* people to come in and bow that thing with that can!" McLeod says.

Some of the most interesting sounds at the Co-Op come from Scott Bazar from Panama City. Bazar plays a block of wood fitted with wire, large springs, metal rods, a can of Vienna Sausages, and a microphone. Sounds of thunderstorms and 1950s Sci-Fi movies lurch from the contraption.

The meetings are mostly free-form improvisation with some pieces having a loose structure suggested by a host. Banjo, acoustic and electric guitars, violin and percussion in a large circle execute those ideas, while folk art and books by regional authors look over the player's shoulders.

"There are moments of free improv, large group improvisation, sub-groups of instruments working within a provided format and even times where we pass the sound around from person to person. Anything goes . . . although we love having hosts who bring fresh ideas to the proceedings," McLeod says.

For example the first meeting in September featured a piece dividing the room into two groups. One group locked into a rhythm with the other intent on destroying their concentration.

McLeod hosts each co-op, occasionally inviting guest hosts to lead the interaction. Guest hosts have included LaDonna Smith, who with Davey Williams pioneered the improv scene in Alabama in the 70's and Craig Hultgren, cellist with Alabama Symphony, who co-organized with Smith and others the first *BirminghamImprov* in 1993.

It's a very healthy experience to play, create sound and make noise, and everyone who was there participated. They got to do some playing and hear some stuff by other people. I also like the down-to-earth, un-hyped quality of the meeting. Everyone is very genuine. There are some really new sounds and strategies that did open minds including my own.

As Montgomery, Alabama continues it's co-op, an open-minded musical community will grow within it. The potential and the interest is here.

For more info email Jeff McLeod: jeff@soundandchaos.com



The Alabama Improvisers Co-op is a musical gathering that will happen once a month here in Montgomery. It's an opportunity for people interested in free improvisation to meet and play together. Whether you are an experienced musician or have never touched an instrument before, you are invited and welcome.

We hope to create an environment in which experienced musicians can experiment with different musicians, instruments and styles and for non-musicians to actually experience for the first time what an amazing feeling it is to express oneself through improvisation. We really want to emphasize that ALL people will be welcomed with open arms.

Here are some things you'll need:

1. An instrument of some sort (although you can come just to watch and enjoy the music).
2. If you are bringing an electric instrument, please be courteous to those with acoustic instruments and bring only a small amplifier. A short extension cord or power strip might help, too.
3. An open mind and a willingness to improvise or learn about improvisation

There will be 3 drawings for improvisation related items and free sodas for all attending.

Improvisation in Childhood Music Training and Techniques for Creative Music Making

By LaDonna Smith

2009

As a person whose musical education from childhood made a tremendous impact on my life, and as one whom in adulthood has participated and noticed trends and techniques in musical education for children; I have come to gain an enormous interest in finding new directions, and new creative resources for the teaching of music to children.

Having been around day school programs, traditional music lessons, functioning for 15 years as teacher and Director of a Suzuki Violin Program, a church musician, and a pioneering improviser in the current movement of free improvisation in America; I find that the next most pressing challenge for music educators, practitioners, and teachers, and for me personally, is to forge new directions in music education, particularly those which involve improvisation. Not that classical education is bad. In fact, I truly appreciate being brought up in the classical school, in the traditions that echoed traditions. But it forces me to look deep, when I observe music being taught as it always has been taught, both on the elementary and even the college level. New life must be breathed into our methods or the effectiveness of music education is in serious jeopardy of breaking down. It is time to change old concepts of music study, and instrumental instruction, if we are to survive with the changing of the times; for music education to survive as a viable force, accessible, and challenging the advances of the new millennium.

Cultural boundaries are being replaced with cultural inter-relationships, and music, being a strong voice for the expression of culture and the times in which we live, is also changing. Therefore, the way that we teach music, and the emphasis that we place on traditions and techniques is radically changing as well. In a day and age when corporate interests and media arts are largely influencing the aesthetics of the population, the conservatory of the high arts must bring itself to face the call for a global musical theory, or else we face extinction. With the information age, the massive accessibility of synthesized instrumental sounds, pre-set rhythmic structures, as well as products and programs for computer generated music making, many of

which are imitative of our own inventions, now-turned cliches of our own generation; threaten to endanger the organic expression of the human soul, through impulsive music making.

The voice, the most primal of all our humanly endowed musical instruments, must be restored as the fundamental connection to our inner life. It is the gift to every human being, as the vehicle for human expression, for sound, for words and meanings. Indeed, the poetry of the mind is expressed through the voice, and our inner range of emotion may be recaptured through it. It is one of the few things that we have left that connect us with our own organic nature, with our own bodies. And in the ever technologically changing world in which we live, we all possess our voice as the primal resource for our own expression. In toning, we can recapture our past, we can plug in to our own healing forces, through vibrations. In singing, we connect with our human emotions through the colorful expressions of the tones inherent in the voice, as well as the utterances of words and meanings, expressing our thoughts. The voice, with the mind, is still the most powerful communicating vessel that we possess as a human being, and our modern musical education should honor and reflect that fact.

In our changing world, we have already evolved *beyond* the exploration of tones, of creating melody, harmony, and rhythm, of ordering sound, of composition being an artistic amalgamation of these elements, of creating structural pieces from these. All this is a part of the wonderful western musical heritage, but through globalization and industrialization, we have come to accept many more sounds and cultural influences into our music. In fact, learning the acceptance of SOUND itself (any sound and all sound), is essential not only to our expression, but to our health and well-being, as the modern world has bombarded us with new environmental sounds, mechanical, electronic, and sonic. In the last score alone, we have synthesized and generated an enormous palette of sound colors, never before known to man, which are now common in our environment. Usages of environmental sound, sound in musique concrete, and the widespread proliferation of recordings of indigenous music, the collecting of sound bytes, the editing tools, the processing, all of these contribute to a new order and a new age in the musical creativity of mankind.

The influences of jazz practices and the study of indigenous world music practices have yielded new directions, placing a renewal of importance in the practice of improvisation. Indeed, there has existed for the last 30 years a movement of music, called *free improvisation*, which is based on the operation of psychic automatism and marks no necessary association with given musical styles, or either free-association with *any* and *all* musical styles... It is an act of creation from the point of no pre-conception, utilizing what instruments or tools are at hand. Indeed, it has lead to a proliferation of the invention of new musical instruments, ranging from technological advances to primitive instruments of homemade origin. It is a music that doesn't necessarily require musical training! It is a music that can be primarily recreational. Or, the practice of improvisation, as well, may assume the form of a high art; performed in public places for an informed audience ready for a "music of the moment:" a music which is both composed and performed by the same being, a music which is the direct expression of the performer.

What then, *IS* important for teachers of music to convey these days? All conservatory standards have already been superceded by the demands of a public, barraged from every angle by modern resources, extended techniques, advancing theories and philosophies, which include a global culture.

With children, I think it is important to include from the very start, a conceptual training, which will facilitate channeling the natural talent into usable musical forms. The traditional western instrumental techniques must be preserved if we are to preserve our heritage, just as the practice of shenai playing must be preserved if there is to be a Chinese orchestra, but even the pedagogy of musical instruments must evolve to include new directions in musical instrument involvement.

Improvisation is clearly a key to unlock the doors of music making in the future. With change being the constant element of our existence (as it always has been), musical training should begin with the concept of creativity placed first and foremost above "how-to" methodology, tradition, or technique. Those would become the "special" studies.

The analogy may be like this. "I want, I desire, I visualize the creation, say, of a quilt that tells the story of my life. It will look like this...

It will have *these* squares. Then, the question becomes, "How can I do it?" First the desire, then the idea, and then comes the technique. First you get the picture, then you cut the material into shapes, or create figures that tell a story, or combine colors that create a mood. You dye the material, you practice the sewing techniques, you stuff the quilt, you hem. The ideas may change as you go. You adapt, and continue to create as you proceed with the process. One day the masterpiece is complete, only to leave the possibility for starting the process all over, once again.

Practical Matters

Students should be given the tools for thinking.

Students should be given the permission for feeling.

Students should be given the opportunity for invention.

Even at a very early age, questions should be asked. "What is SOUND?" "What Is Music?" "What makes Sound Different from Music." "IS Sound different from music?" "Think of all the possible sounds as potential material for making music, just as you would think of parts of the alphabet that are combined to be made into words, which in turn are made into sentences which express stories, ideas, concepts, great poetry or prose, or even lies."

In today's classrooms, music is too often taught by rote, or by imitation of "traditional" songs, or nursery rhymes. While it's beneficial to preserve some tradition, and necessary, if we are to orally pass music on, having some historical correlation or significance; but I find it horrifying to eavesdrop on a class of 5 year olds, and only hear the "Alphabet Song" repeated ad infinitum, to the point where you ask yourself, "Gee, I thought these kids *knew* the alphabet before they even came to school. What are we teaching? Is this is total regression?" Or to observe a piano lesson where all emphasis is begun with note recognition of middle C, and D...etc. and not with "lets find some music here..." Or with a violin lesson where we say, "Place finger... Set... Play... Stop! Swing... Place finger... Set... Play... Stop! While Suzuki is the advocate of listening and rote playing, the student develops, through a good deal of ear training and early development of motor skills. But, there is again, beyond the repetition of skills and graded progression of "selected" literature, little or no theory, and absolutely no *creativity* on the instrument even implied as part of the method. It is all about "listening", and "developing a fine heart," which is good. But what of the primal, innate, inner listening, that stimulates self-expression? Is that not what music stems from? Shall we not encourage this creative expression? Too often, we are blinded to this by trying to encourage a correct technique, a right sound, or an exact rendering of a repertory piece, as it was "interpreted" in its day. It is a totally different emphasis. "What, then is a good musician?" "What are we really training?" Are we still training our students to "do as we do, as our teachers taught, as it has always been done?"

Sadly, as I look into University curriculums, it is apparent that nothing much has changed in the past 30 years. What do four-part harmonizations of Bach's musical style, and 17th century counterpoint have to do with the musical needs of the 21st century? There are many advances in the art of composition, in the technology of music, and in the *return to improvisation* as the direct route to self-expression. The need for music departments to change priorities and create curriculum to reflect the present tendencies is imminent. Even traditional church musicians are in need of new directions and influences in their education, new tools to create from, stimulating new expression, in order to breathe a new music into the spiritual life of their constituency. Without new tools, changing with the times, improvising a new direction, the life of Western Spirituality as we know it is dying.

Musical creativity should be the first and foremost priority in the teaching of music.

In every music lesson, there should be a time for improvisation, for invention, and a time for technical training, and development of the tools, which would include improvisational skills based on free and theoretical styles. These could come from western or eastern classical music, specific indigenous cultural practices as chosen by the individual, based on their interest or heritage, from pop or jazz, or from free improvisation.

In early music training, this would include right-brained vocalization, and exploratory listening to sounding, harmonizing, verbalizing and even toning. It would include stimulating left-brained discussions of instrument families, sound-source "types," assignments to invent instruments, to find new "sound-makers", even for use in creating a community "sound-orchestra", or innovative architectural sound environments.

In specific applied instrumental training, improvisation should be a regular interactive, activity:

of finding sounds,

of utilizing scales, chords, and clusters,

of setting up rhythmic patterns,

of interacting with another instrument,

of experimenting with two's threes, quartets, and voice combinations.

of probing what new sounds the instrument is capable of producing

of probing for sound qualities...

of categorizing sound colors...

of analyzing how sounds make you feel...

In Suzuki string classes....

Typically, music memorization is emphasized in order to free us from the page for better technical awareness and expression. I would like to see the addition of scale study, not just major-minor, but made-up scales and scale patterns...and not just practiced in three octaves, in memorization of the theory and fingering; but practiced in patterns with hip, modern accompaniments, applying them to creative excursions in improvisation, creating understanding of theory by practice rather than memorization. Also, the "forging of sound" is a new concept that could well be applied to the string student. Early creative and innovative introductions to instrumental sounds and extended bowing techniques....would apply a far greater development of awareness and creative sensitivity in these students than the constant attempted generation of the "big" sound. I am not worried. The fundamental *will* be found!

Improvisation practices naturally lead to the development of the art of composition.

Invariably, mankind loves to preserve its inspirations. And there are many techniques for writing, developing, and realizing musical ideas. In order to prepare the student for his own self expression, then it follows that there should also be the inclusion of creative capturing. This includes designing events, recording by modern technology or even "old-fashioned" score writing. Composition should be a staple of musical education and study. *Compositional games* and practices could include specific assignments utilizing various and specific theoretical

components, or loose structure conceptualizations such as graphic notation, or stories that bear theatrical imagery, sonic meditation on fixed parameters... lets think now!

A major aspect of musical curriculum, theory, and philosophy would include the enormous importance of LISTENING. Not just *hearing*, but "*listening*" with you full attention to what is occurring in the moment, to talk about it, noticing what is commanding our attention, and verbalizing on it, as in the "Deep Listening" conceptual innovations of Pauline Oliveros.

One outcome would be the re-definition of "musical literacy." Musical literacy would not only include being capable of *interpreting* the music of our traditions. It means being capable of using the tools of the 21st Century which include use of computers, new technology, new programs as well as new conceptions. But finally, musical literacy, defines the tools for embracing all self-expression. This would include the mental processes necessary to free the mind from the constrictions of training and form. It would provide the permission to delve into the deep recesses of creative process, to dig for the gold within our own beings, for every human being to find the music of his own soul. To re-instate the recognition and evolution of a new folk music through improvisation: "the returning of the musical creativity to the people, as it were..."

Ideas for Improvisation Class

Students would have musical instruments. The following outline presents a comprehensive course of study through an improvisational perspective. Not all of these lessons could be performed in a single clinic. These are the areas which could be developed over a consistent course of time.

However, for a one hour Suzuki clinic, I would suggest working with the use of a single scale, fragmenting, and applying rhythmic variations, passing phrases, "imitating, and introducing", against a simple harmonic background. The background, of course, could be changed to create variety in the exercise. The second emphasis for the session would be the exploration of extended techniques on the instruments, the combination of tones and sounds, and some conducted free improvisation games or studies... The emphasis would be on the ability to "let go" of pre-conceived notions and enjoy exploring the limitations of the moment.

EXTENDED COURSE OF STUDY

I. Use of improvisation and development of improvisational skills in the introduction of **teaching linear and harmonic music theory.**

(applied music theory)

A. Scale study

1. use of scale fragments, and patterns
2. rhythmic applications with scale patterns
3. motifs, imitation, retrograde, inversion
4. flow

B. Harmony (linear)

1. spelling chords, arpeggios
2. use of arpeggios and passing tones
3. use of enharmonic tones for creative purposes
4. following ear or imagination (abandon)

C. Functional Harmony

1. chord progressions (types and styles)
2. building chords on the diatonic scale (i,ii,iii,IV,V,vi,vii)
3. passing between chords, in and out of key
4. floating sound masses
5. sound effects

II. Developing SOUND, and Sound Abstractions

(through pitches, timbres, instruments, objects, voice, inventions)

A. Listening – (awareness of environmental sounds)

1. transparent sounds, wind sounds, white noises
2. indeterminate pitched sounds
3. textural sounds (paper blowing in the wind)
4. layered sounds
5. single pure tones

A. Creating – (all of the above)

III Investigating rhythmic structures

1. recognizable rhythmic structures, simple or complex
2. combinations of indeterminate sound mass, determinate pitches and rhythms
3. layering rhythmic structures

IV Automatism (improvisation)

- A. Moving from "awareness" (listening) to "action" (just do it)
 1. plug in to the subconscious, (dropping self-consciousness)
 2. reacting (utilizing self-consciousness)
 3. responding
- A. Be a human vehicle for the unseen forces to move you, let the sound not come from you, but "through" you (super-consciousness)

V. Automatic sound composition

- A. Experimental Mind games with stimuli such as:
 1. rules and parameters
 2. graphic notation
 3. listening to inner urges
 4. combining with others, dialog
 5. solo excursions
- B. Critique without judgement. (Noticing what has been created):
 1. describe what happened
 2. how did it begin, progress, and end?
 3. How did it make you feel? (emotional content or impact)
 4. Was it interactive?
 5. Or evolving from a single source?
 6. Was it framed by silence?
 7. What was it's shape?
 8. What was it's texture?
 9. Did a melody occur?
 10. Was it spontaneous, reactive, or meditative?
 11. How long was the event?
 12. Could it be captured?
 13. Was it idea oriented?

14. Was it primarily created by a compositional technique, or by abandon and creative spark?
15. Which is more useful?

VI. Composition

- A. Capturing the inspiration
(the spark, the motif, the "flow")
- B. Crafting the Captured inspiration into a piece
 1. working with the elements
 2. "fleshing out" (editing, and re-writing),

harmony
melody
rhythm
orchestration
concept
 3. Realization (making final product)

Performance

Score

File (cd, tape, or other medium)

VII Observation and Analysis

- A. Discussion
 1. Did you enjoy the music?
 2. Did the music "move" you?
 3. Did you endure it? How did it affect you as a receiving receiver?
 4. Would you want to hear it again?
 5. Did you read any "meaning" into or from it?
 6. Does the practice of composing strengthen your creative skills of expression in verbal, philosophical, theoretical, or other areas?
- B. Written Analysis or Review (just think about it...)

The Moment As Teacher



by LaDonna Smith

1996

Vibrating in the moment, we are our own teachers. Shortcuts to learning can be achieved through the experience of others, but it is only through the Self, vibrating in the moment, that we truly *learn*, whether it be encouraged by external teachers or through direct experience.

Music is the grand extension of the inner vibrations of the soul.

As our soul vibrates, our mind and bodies respond with their own movements...

(not unlike the amorphous and flagellate movements of amoeba and euglena in the waters of their world.)

The imagination, activated and alive seeks to express itself. We could be talking through any number of disciplines ranging from artistic endeavors to sports, to loving, to developing, to planning, programming, philosophying, computing, etc. to survival (whatever it takes) but in the interest of the subject of this moment, we will pursue the avenue of musical expression.

Our over-developed society has made the mistake of limiting by categorizing music into periods and styles, completely undermining the true nature of the soul. In defining music in this way, one can have in our technologically advanced audio world just about any kind of musical style known to the history of man merely by playing sound reproductions on any number of technological media devices. Sound waves containing this "information" is prevalent and accessible. Man can "sponge" the spiritual qualities completely out of this "music" and no doubt, derive great benefits both therapeutic and pleasurable. Or he can participate in the trends and powers inherent in the commercial uses of music deriving from the souls, spirits, egos, and minds of practitioners. But in this development of the accessibility of all musics through this media, the normal person has lost the ability to bring the music directly from his own inner vibration as an extension of *himself*. Too many musicians with "learned" instrumental and marketing skills are creating from the formulas of power and profit.

But what of tapping that inner vibration to let the soul sing or grieve in its own language? This is the basis of this article. Why, but of course! And using *anything* at hand!

Musical instruments were invented as an extension of the body to resonate sound. And now electronic instruments are an extension also of the mind in technological expression. However, with all the inventions, came conventions as to playing technique. But it seems to me that one of the most difficult things for modern musicians with their rich training, background, and development is to let go of convention and come back to invention. It too often assumed that any historical instrument is married to its conventional technique. (Case in point- violin). The playing "how to's", step by step lessons, tradition, critical review, teachings, and practices define so much of what is the modern perception of music today. As well as the popular-idiomatic realm as heard on MTV and commercial radio, the general masses as well as many "trained musicians" have equally lost the connection. **This places improvisation as a musical practice, and as an attitude, in the forefront as a potential "savior" for our society.**

The improvisation movement in the U.S. and Europe has been growing in practice and acceptance since the 1960's, building steam in the 70's, attracting more attention in the 80's and becoming a "buzzword" in the 90's. This is a welcomed departure from the control and regulation that has been seen in musical development throughout the history books.

Instead of outward political rebellion against academic or market control, improvisors tend to be an a-politically motivated group, and generally are spiritually or recreationally oriented. They turn inward, connecting in their personal experiments. Taking instruction from no one, they invent their own techniques, play what they want-feel-need to play, break

many of the conventional rules of technique and protocol, and just "re-create". It's very close to "recreation". No wonder it's called PLAY!

This is a basic human need. Just as animals call and play, so do humans need this release from the structured world. An activity of finding an inner joy, release, freedom, pleasure, the place of no restraints, no rules, no conventions; but touching, sensing, feeling, allowing, and noticing... And from this point of awareness comes recreation and inspiration. Recreation is the freedom to form a new image, a new vibration rising from the soul to make outer evidence from inner ambience. The message here is the taking over of the ownership of one's soul and its expression through the invention of one's own music. To do this, one must shed the skins of past accomplishments and live in the moment. ***Let all notes fall where they may!***

All sounds: pure and clean, fuzzed, split and dirty, thick, thin, high, low, loud, soft, free, fat, limited, or loaded belong to the larynx of the soul and the mind's rational counterpart, the imagination.

Unleashed, every human being is equal. Every soul possesses a depth of feelings, love, resistance, openness, and intuition. Given **freedom**, the license to be right by being wrong, awareness and attention to changing conditions creates the deposition of **discovery** and therefore at the same time, ***learning***.

raw experience is the teacher

Improvisation is a way to approach learning from an interior view. Not waiting in the "don't know state" for external information, but exploring impulses opens new doors and pathways with many more windows to open. Discovery is exciting, and it's O.K. to be a beginner. The fact is, the less you know, the more you improvise. But, you can know your instrumental technique very well, and with open attitude transcend that and still be a great improviser. One can ***cultivate*** the quality.

It is the technique of observing and listening, and simultaneously letting go of previous "education", pre-conceptions or criticism, and let the mind re-create the wheel. Why not?

In this way you can TEACH YOURSELF. The truth is in trust. Trust that you are alive and have an organismic natural response to stimulus, conditions, and circumstance. You, as a human entity, **will respond** naturally, and whatever comes will be the truth. Listen and observe without judgement and continue....

You will discover your own music is there already. It only needs a vehicle for its transport. Pick up a violin and resonate its strings. Discover how it works, and simultaneously it sings...Let the first sound carry you to the next and follow still its contour. Your ear will lead your fingers, deriving your next moment only from the last, and alter again the avenues of your perception. In the moment of creation you will be learning, and

The important thing to remember is that the music is within us. Direct experience and our own intuition is the greatest teacher.

THOMAS GAUDYNSKI REPORT

2008

Listening, Looking and Performing in 2007

by Thomas Gaudynski



01/01/08 11:20AM

Introduction – Part One

Listening and thinking about sound art/music and related ideas as well as performing throughout 2007 lead me down a variety of paths. Some of these preoccupations occurred because they are related to my occupation (earning a living through consulting and teaching) while others are part of my avocation (making, performing, learning about, and critiquing sound-related art works). Please note that all errors and omissions are my own.

To begin with teaching, during Spring semester 2007 I wanted to connect some of the young designers and artists at Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design (MIAD) with the social, technical, commercial, and historical origins of the computer technology that most of us use everyday for our creative efforts. How did we come to have these wonderful and accessible tools for our educational, communications, and entertainment needs?

Wanting to explore the origin of and issues related to computers as tools for thought and creativity, I developed a course called *From Utopia to Today*. In this survey, I introduced

my students to the scientists, designers, artists and think-tanks from the early part of the 20th Century through today whose utopian visions drove the concepts, media and products we all take for granted. From **Alan Turing**, **John von Neumann**, **Norbert Weiner**, and **Vannevar Bush** to **Douglas Engelbart**, **Ivan E. Sutherland**, **Alan Kay**, and **Ted Nelson**, we covered the theoretical, scientific and commercial development of computers.

It was fascinating listening to each student early in the semester describe their first experience with computers, video games, cell phones, music playback systems, and all the technologies that have converged and are now miniaturized and fit either in their pocket or backpack. Unlike people of my generation who grew up rooted to place (think land line phones, console TVs, stereo systems, and those first enormous desktop PCs), my students are a mobile generation carrying their world with them where they go. When you realize how much computers as we know them came first through the efforts of technicians engaged in war and later from the visionaries who never considered commercial development but wanted to empower human thought, it is amazing that today it is business, commerce and fashion that drive the development of computers. I hope the class was a wake up call for the "look through any Windows," iBook, iPod, iPhone generation.

Fall 2007, I presented a class called *Hi & Lo Tech Art in the Sixties*. My intention was to look at art from that time period through the lens of the technology used to produce it, rather than the list of movements and "isms" usually used to describe art of the time—**Happenings**, **Fluxus**, **Pop Art**, **Op Art**, **Minimalism**, **Kinetic Art**, **Conceptual Art**, **Earth Art**, etc. Underlying the art history survey component, I wanted to explore with my students various questions: whether the technology used was a neutral tool or a McLuhanist carrier more powerful than the content, or how deeply could you define technology—everything that human's used to produce artifacts, or just the results of post-industrial society, etc., and ultimately what impact that had on both the conception of art and the resulting artifact. While not as successfully conceived as the *From Utopia to Today* material, it allowed me to range over a variety of sound art and music examples and themes, always an underlying drive in my teaching. More on listening to music in that context below.

In February, I collected three hours of music I downloaded, principally from myspace sites, and curated a program of downloaded music for **Hal Rammel's** *Alternating Currents* program on WMSE 91.7 FM. (You in turn can download or stream his program from February 18, 2007 at <http://www.wmse.org/archive.php?dow=Sun&hour=180>) In the spirit of "information wants to be free," I followed the practice that if it was available for download, I was granted permission to do so. Some artists featured included **Tim Perkis**,

Kyle Bruckmann's *Wrack*, **Scott Burland** and **Frank Schultz's** *Duet for Theremin and Lapsteel*, **Susan Alcorn**, **Christian Munthe**, **Mazen Kerbaj**, and **Nick Didkovsky's** *Swim This* with **Gerry Hemingway** and **Michael Lytle**. I was just passing the music on to another group of listeners trying to extend the life of these great examples of contemporary sound art.

Also in February, **Rammel** released *Like Water Tightly Wound* on *Crouton Music*. The recording is a 10 inch vinyl disk in an "antiqued-themed 78 record package," featuring two works performed by him on his self-design and constructed "Sound Palettes," (wooden painter palettes that contain various rods mounted perpendicular to the surface and amplified through a contact microphone). This is a concentrated sound experience and compilation of some of the more subtle techniques and sounds available from these instruments. I rarely hear this level of clarity and subtlety when he plays in a live situation. The recording quality shows off all the light tinkles, warm resonant tones, and deep roars capable with these instruments that at times sound like percussion at others cello or bass, but with an intimacy as if he were playing in the room with you, rather than in a large hall or gallery. *Like Water Tightly Wound* extends the work from his *Lost Data* series of the previous year.

At the end of March, composer/performer/computer installation artist **George Lewis** gave a lecture at University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee called "Living with Creative Machines." Lewis, an active improviser, has been a pioneer in the use of software-based interactive instruments beginning with his work *Voyager* from the mid-1980s. Besides auditing the survey of his work, and hearing him astutely answer questions from both university show-offs in the audience as well as people who clearly had no clue about his work or milieu, my main take-away was his remark that, "improvisation is the ubiquitous practice of everyday life." Well there you have it.

In preparation for the tenth anniversary celebration for the *Audiotrope* trio (**Hal Rammel**—invented instruments, **Steve Nelson-Raney**—soprano and sopranino saxophones, and myself—guitars, voice and electronics mostly) to be held in May, I facilitated a "self-interview" with intention of publishing a commemorative book for our celebration performance. We met and discussed origins, influences, working methods, and surprisingly, a number of aesthetic differences. A feature of our work over the last decade has been the avoidance of discussion about the music, other than brief observations, usually following one of the 60 plus concerts during that time, like "well you guys sounded really good," etc. So, some of the items or issues laid dormant waiting for an inevitable outpouring. I transcribed the interview, passed it to Hal and Steve, who made minor changes and suggested edits. Independently, I solicited contributions from a number of others, most of whom obliged, and **Marly Gisser** and I put it into form as a

small book published by *Necessary Arts*.



Audiotrope Steve Nelson Raney, Hal Rammell, Thomas Gaudynski

Audiotrope celebrated the anniversary with a concert at Woodland Pattern Book Center in May. There are still some copies of the book available for those who weren't there or didn't get a review copy. Let me know if you'd like one.

Also in March, **Gary Hassay**, saxophonist from Allentown, PA, who I first met in 1982 when the trio **Diana David, Paul Gaudynski** and **Thomas Gaudynski** (DG&G) performed there, asked me to write liner notes for his forthcoming album *Beauty*. I spent a few weeks listening first to all the pieces recorded with this trio including **Dan Dechellis** on piano, and **Tatsuya Nakatani** on percussion—about 120 minutes of music. (Nakatani played in Milwaukee in November at Woodland Pattern Book Center recently with Swedish guitarist **David Stackenäs** as part of *Alternating Currents Live*. See below.) Then a few more weeks to the final cut list before putting fingers to word processor. Rather than describe the music specifically as in a review, since I knew the reader would already have made their purchasing decision, I determined to take a more poetic approach to the concept of beauty, and how the trio had channeled it during their work. The album came out this past fall.

From the intro of my *Meditation on Beauty*:

Much of what goes for beauty today is arbitrated by commerce and is reinforced by advertising and media. We have been warped and turned aside by the enemies of beauty. Tempted to worship false appearance. Who needs that?

It only takes a little effort to shut off that influence—for us to strip our individual humanity to its essence opening our selves to nature. True beauty, undetermined by human greed, can only be found there. Lest we forget, we are part of nature.

Our senses are the doors to beauty. Opening, we can take in the wholeness of form, balance, and harmony of the natural order. Although nature is not pretty. Nature is our terrible and grave home. True natural beauty fills us with awe.

Necessary Arts client *Bel Canto Chorus* presented a fascinating aural event of choral music in May at the Sisters of Saint Joseph Chapel all revolving around the theme of light. The Chapel is a long narrow room with high arched ceiling that sat about 400 listeners squeezed into high-backed pews and folding chairs along the walls. The risers for the chorus were set in front of the alter in effect shortening the length of the room and leaving a large resonant cavity above the chorus. Beginning at the back of the room behind the audience, the chorus began with *Gregorian Chant*. Then, holding candles in the darkened space, they filed into the aisles, stopped and sang *O Nata Lux* by **Thomas Tallis**. Finally they took their places on the risers in front and finished the evening singing works by **Rachmaninoff**, **Holst**, **John Rutter**, and **Morten Lauridsen**. A very effective use of the space throughout.

In June, I wanted to try something new for a planned performance in August with *Audiotrope*. I pulled my first guitar, a *KAY* archtop, out of the basement after twenty-five years, dusted it off and spent some time exploring what I could do with. Understand, this instrument, given to me by **Paul Gaudynski** for Christmas in 1978, never was playable in the usual sense of the word describing an instrument—it had a warped neck, slipping tuning pegs, etc. But for an improviser without preconceptions, it was a great resonant box with strings. The initial results of my exploration were quite different from anything I might have tried when I first acquired it, but perhaps related to the exploratory approach heard on *Solo 99*. I worked with the instrument through June and July recording solo pieces, and then, while mastering, I overlapped some solos simultaneously and created a few sound constructions. I also raised the action on the neck and tuned *KAY* to DADFAD. I completed the project in time for my 57th birthday and *Necessary Arts* published *KAY, A new listen to an old guitar* in September in an edition of 75. I dedicated it to **Paul**

Gaudynski, for accompanying me on some of my musical journeys and gifting me with KAY, and to **Eugene Chadbourne**, for inspiring me to play guitar ultimately in my own fashion.

July saw the initial performance of *Milwaukee Laptop Orchestra (MiLO)* at Hotcakes Gallery. Brainchild of **Chris Burns**, *MiLO* is an evolving group of aural and visual laptop artists with visiting acoustic and electro-acoustic musicians. The first performance included two screens of mutating and evolving projected images mixed live with accompaniment or juxtaposition of sound works improvised by various laptop performers and a pair of saxophonists. Although it was a great beginning, there were times that I wished *Stockhausen* or someone was in the back of the room with a mixer adjusting levels through out. I thought the ensemble sense of its own mix was not as articulated as I would have liked, but this was their first performance. The group has performed twice since then, including accompanying the 1927 film by **Walter Ruttmann**, *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*, and I regret missing them. Burns assures me not to worry since he has plans for many other events.

Part Two:

01/01/08 11:24AM

Listening, Looking and Performing in 2007 – Part Two

Introduction – Part Two

Listening and thinking about sound art/music and related ideas as well as performing throughout 2007 lead me down a variety of paths. Some of these preoccupations occurred because they are related to my occupation (earning a living through consulting and teaching) while others are part of my avocation (making, performing, learning about, and critiquing sound-related art works). Please note that all errors and omissions are my own.

In September **Hal Rammel** organized a performance of the *Lost Data Project*, named after his composition and recording project from 2006, along with **Jon Mueller** and **Jim Schoenecker**. The performance with Rammel on sound palettes and turntable, Mueller on feedback resonated percussion, and Schoenecker on synthesizer and turntable, took place at the Haggerty Museum of Art in conjunction with an exhibition of **Gina Litherland's** fine magic surrealism paintings. The music centered around slowly evolving textures rather than call and response or "squeaky-bonky" improvised interplay. The music suited the resonant space of the museum. You can hear a sample of the performance at http://www.topscoreusa.com/lost_data_092007.mp3.

In October I listened to **Rae Armantrout** and **Jane Hirschfield** read their poetry at Woodland Pattern Book Center—an interesting pairing that made for an eclectic evening. Both read short works that they introduced with contextual comments and stories. Each poem read seemed to expect an "uh-huh" moment at the end—here's my poetic object about this or composed of that; audience response, oh "uh-huh." Comparing it to a musical event, I was surprised that the rhythm of the performance was composed of such short events, with such typical end results for each piece or movement. More like a pop (or song-form) music recital than jazz, chamber music, or electro-acoustic music concerts.

Jon Mueller of *Crouton Music* organized a visit by the trio *Konk Pack* (**Tim Hodgkinson** tabletop guitar and electronics, **Thomas Lehn** analog synthesizer, and **Roger Turner** drums and percussion) in mid-October at the newly remodeled Cactus Club. Mueller graciously invited *Audiotrope* to open for them. I had heard a few of *Konk Pack*'s recordings, found on-line, and was familiar with the work of the group's members as individuals and in other contexts, so I was excited that a group of their caliber was visiting. As the promotion materials described, "each concert is legendary." The club has a backroom that allows a level of subtlety in performance since it is removed from the noisier bar section. *Audiotrope* took advantage of that space to move from quiet to loud, spare to complex in a brief opening set. *Konk Pack* however seized the opportunity to blast with high intensity and frenetic energy throughout their entire set sweeping everything away in their path. Turner could not rest and kept the music moving with unbounded rhythmic energy. Lehn uses his tiny synth to noisy advantage and employed such great body language.

And Hodgkinson, spurred on by the other two, with his pixy grin, ripped it up with his plucked strings and pedal effects. It was a great, nay, legendary concert.

During much of 2007, I spent working with my client the *Urban Ecology Center* on marketing planning. The Center is a fascinating organization that works to connect young people, primarily, with nature in an urban setting. Through its educational efforts in our neighborhood on Milwaukee's East Side—they bring students from neighborhood schools to Riverside Park daily for science-based experiential learning about nature—they have helped reduce crime in the park and help protect the natural areas along the Milwaukee River. Visiting the Center and the park often, I came to appreciate listening to the urban environment with perhaps more attention than usual. I began taking sound walks and attending to the interplay of natural and manmade sounds. I'm working on developing either some listening exercises or suggested sound walks for visitors to the area. Perhaps helping auditors with checklists of sounds, not unlike the bird lists that

birders compile. For example, walking into the park from the Locust Street Bridge, you move away from the intense sound of traffic to the micro-sound environment of song birds, crickets, and wind in the trees. Moving towards the river, you experience both the sounds reverberating beneath the bridge span and contained in the river valley. Walking deeper into the park, you might almost imagine being in the country, but still hear the sound of a passing plane or the low distant rumble of Highway 43 two miles to the west.

2007 was a lean year for discretionary spending on new recordings. I counted only seven CD purchases—most made with financial gifts for birthday or holidays, plus a few exchanges with other artists, and of course internet or radio listening. This, however was offset to a degree by the amount of music I brought up from the basement where my LPs are stored.

Much of this listening to older recordings was driven by teaching. In Spring, I needed to play examples of computer music and so brought up **Hiller and Isaacson's** *Illiad Suite for String Quartet*, **Milton Babbitt's** *Philomel*, and **Charles Wuorinen's** *Time's Encomium*. In Fall, I need to play various examples of music created with low technology and so brought up **David Behrman's** *Runthrough*, **David Tudor's** *Rainforest*, **John Cage's** *Radio Music* and *Cartridge Music*. I also introduced students to voltage-controlled modular synthesizer music and played them **Wendy Carlos'** *Switched on Bach* and **Morton Subotnick's** *Silver Apples of the Moon* (although I had to borrow both of these from the Milwaukee Public Library.) And I needed to contextualize these last examples from the sixties with **The Beatles'** *Tomorrow Never Knows* and **Frank Zappa's** *Uncle Meat*. For my two classes I went through the painstaking process of digitizing my brief examples from LPs without really the proper equipment or software.

Then in October, **Jim Cogan** invited me to guest lecture during his *History of Sound in American Media* class at Beloit College. In specifying the equipment available in his classroom he said there was a turntable. After trying to teach aspects of musical history, specifically from the sixties and seventies, at an art school where everything is either completely digital or of the most antique processes available with no middle ground—think printmaking or painting—this was a wonderful opportunity to present the music in the form it was designed for: vinyl records. Focusing on aspects of electronic music, I played excerpts of **Terry Riley's** *A Rainbow In Curved Air*, **Steve Reich's** *It's Gonna Rain* and *Violin Phase*, as well as the library copy of *Switched on Bach*. Both Cogan and I passed around the sleeves and handled the disks like holy relics from the past.

Unfortunately during Q & A I made a remark apparently denigrating **Frank Zappa's** music as pop, and the students immediately challenged my characterization. I'm sorry I used

the term "pop" and not "commercial." No matter how masterful or enjoyable Zappa's music is, I don't believe he ever conceived it in terms of art—that rarified form of hot house flower. His music was intended to be heard through the mechanisms of commercial music no matter how much he may have lampooned commercialism and his own work's lack of commercial potential. A sly fox that one.

Capitalizing on the honorarium that Cogan secured for me to teach the class and the end-of-year need to find tax deductions for *Necessary Arts*, I bought a new USB, S/PDF turntable. The first thing I did after figuring out how digitize files was make a copy of the long OOP Columbia Music of Our Times LP *The World of Harry Partch* for my friend and colleague **Paul Krajniak**.

Since then, listening to out of print LPs also drove me back to hear things as diverse as **Anthony Braxton's** *New York, Fall, 1974*, **Gavin Bryars' 1,2,1-2-3-4**, **Christopher Hobbs' McCrimmon Will Never Return**, **Olivier Messiaen's Fete des Belles Eaux** (for sextet of ondes martinot), the **CCMC** 3 record set of *Larry Dubin and the CCMC*, **Jacques Bekaert's A Summer Day at Sony Point**, and **Alvin Curran's Fiori Chiari, Fiori Oscuri**.

Marly Gisser and I had a chance to catch the *Milwaukee Dance Theatre* production of *Spaulding Gray: Stories Left to Tell* just before the run ended in November. Gray's widow, **Kathie Russo**, collected materials from Gray's monologues, letters, and unpublished journal entries which are read/recited throughout the performance by five performers—often with a rotating cast of "stars" taking one of the positions. Co-directors **Isabelle Kralj** and **Mark Anderson** blocked the performers—representing love, adventure, journals, family, and career—throughout the space as they presented what became a mosaic of stories and information that ultimately coalesced into a funny and touching portrait of Gray. You could have sat back, closed your eyes, and experienced the performance as hörspiel, but I had to think of the production through my Brechtian filter. Rather than a continuous narrative interrupted by "situations," the entire production consisted only of "situations." I had to wonder if the order of the material needed to be, or if it was indeed, set to provide a specific dramatic result, or could the elements of the mosaic be presented in any order in a more Cagayan presentation that still had a desirable impact. I'll have to tease that question out with Isabelle and Mark next time I seen them.

On the subject of **Bertolt Brecht**, I again spent some time with his work during 2007 after finding used copies of his *Poems 1913-1956* and *World Dramatists: Bertolt Brecht* by **Karl H. Schoeps**. Then during a conversation at Thanksgiving with **Tom** and **Zach Aries** in Chicago about music and art, Tom asked, "Why do you like Brecht?" At first I was taken aback. Was this one of those questions like, "Why do you like Ezra Pound (when

you know he was an anti-Semite fascist)?" Mixing art with politics. But I forged on and replied that his appeal for me continues to be both his dramatic and poetic work and concepts of theatre as well as his life and times—what was the music like then? What did the art look like? How did people dress and act? It's just the historian in me. I also realize that the Brechtian model of theatre with its intention of promoting critical thinking is out of favor in our digitally networked, game-laden, reality-TV soaked culture, but we got interrupted before we could pursue the conversation further.

November held some interesting opportunities to observe the interplay of video and music. Artist **Catherine Ross** had two works exhibited over a period of four weeks at MIAD. The most successful for me was her piece *Trilling* which consisted of looped close-ups of hands gesturing wildly and the loop fragments passing from right to left. The sound track was a series of trumpet figures that followed the visuals aurally in space. Unfortunately, the gallery didn't post any information about the work so I begin first looking for the logic of the visual images and seeking the loop structure, then trying to understand the sound to image relationship. Later I discovered her website (www.catherineross.net/) and according to her artist's statement, *Trilling* "recombines footage from the early 80s sitcom 'Three's Company' into a sequence of traveling gestural loops. Trumpeter **Taylor Haskins** composed the music, creating a unique improvisational response to each clip." I thought the work had the elegance of a **Steve Reich** tape loop piece. Take a look at the excerpt Ross has on her website.

The *Colloquia in Conceptual Studies* from UWM presented a performance by **Tom Recchion** and **Jonathon Rosen** as *Radio Nurse* in November billed as "live audio-visual contamination and disintegration." I knew of Recchion's work from his *Los Angeles Free Music Society (LAFMS)* double LP from the mid-1970s. And unknowingly, I was familiar with Jonathon Rosen's illustration work through its appearance most recently in a *Science Times* special on Sleep from the *New York Times*. Their performance of live improvised music and visuals was one of the more satisfying sound/image events I've experienced recently—while sound and image were not precisely coordinated, the flow and interplay of each worked quite well together. During performance, Recchion sat with his back to the unfolding images while Rosen faced the screen looking over Recchion's shoulder. The pair described how they shared materials long distance for the few weeks in advance of the performance so had familiarity with other's approach and intentions and consequently they weren't seeking a one-to-one match of sound and image. Later they described their improvisatory method as a "non-linear way of working because stories are hard." Recchion reminded us that there are different free improvisation languages and that for him, he like to have all musical languages available within the context of "free improvisation."

A final performance observed was the duo of **Tatsuya Nakatani** and **David Stackenäs** presented as part of *Alternating Currents Live* at Woodland Pattern Book Center on November 4. (You can stream or download the broadcast from November 11, 2007 at <http://www.wmse.org/archive.php?dow=Sun&hour=180>). I wanted to see/hear Stackenäs after hearing his work on WMSE 91.7 FM previously. How did he play those double set of picked figures on the guitar? (He placed a drum stick under the strings mid-way up the neck and finger picked on both sides of the divided string simultaneously.) And I wanted to revisit Nakatani's work after listening to his playing on *Beauty* all Spring. Both played solo pieces—Nakatani building up a droning tour de force that began and ended with double bows on a large tam tam; Stackenäs presenting his signature picking. Then they both put similar language together in duets. I wrote in my notebook about Nakatani, "undisciplined but ferocious."

As I get ready to face 2008, I'm looking forward to teaching the third iteration of a class I call *Sound + Art + Language* at MIAD—an incomplete and eclectic survey exploring the intersections between the auditory, visual and literary art beginning with **Guillaume Apollinaire**, **Italian Futurism**, **Hugo Ball**, and **Dada**, threading through concrete and sound poetry, and ending up with **Lawrence Weiner**, **Barbara Kruger** and **Laurie Anderson**. But my mind is turning towards something for Fall 2008 tentatively called *Ethics and Aesthetics of Sampling and Appropriation*. I can't wait.

I hope this whirlwind of listening, looking and performing experiences from 2007 is of interest. Time to put on new ears, eyes, and fingers in readiness for another year of sound art and music.

© 2008 Thomas Gaudynski

IMPROVISATION – AN IMPROVISATION

by ROBERT DICK

2005

I really do not have theories about improvisation but rather a body of experience. It seems almost an unnatural act to write about improvisation except (for me, at least) to do so as a free improvisation. Except to correct spelling, that's what this is, no going back to edit or polish. Improvising is the ultimate realtime musical act and I'm going to stay in that spirit. While playing, sometimes I emit a phrase or note or idea and immediately think „oh no! – how is that going to be made to work?“ And most of the time there is way to weave this odd thread into a cogent fabric. When not, it just gets cut. Left hanging, dangling, hopefully soon forgotten in the flow of things. Same for this prose.

When I improvise alone I make a few conscious choices about the nature of the music, its spirit and starting direction. Then its an interior dialog made audible. Improvising with others is conversation. The best listener is the best improviser, whether playing solo or in a group.

There was a time when I tried to be an actor -- taking a role as a starting point. Some kind of dramatic personae or self-transformation. Psychedelic Shakuhachi blaster in molecular space. Fire-spitting iguana (too many bad sci-fi flicks surfacing there. Pity, because iguanas are so loveable.) This phase, which took place several decades ago, was happily short lived. If one is not telling an inner truth of some kind the music will be made at a distance. Second hand clothes on the first person. So whatever iguana is inside, it need not be called upon like learning a part in a play. It will manifest itself or it won't. ("You may keep the fly, dearest. Iguanas can be gentlemen.")

Learning to trust that my inner dialog was of interest was the most important step. As an enormously self-critical person, I also had to trust that my automatic critic, the unconscious editor that accepts or rejects ideas, was enough. There was no need to fish in the lake of angst, to doubly (or more) criticize the flowing music to

the point that it stopped. There are of course moments when silence is the answer. Sometimes there is nothing to say that will contribute to an ensemble. So the experienced improviser will stop. Listening and looking, the place to rejoin the audible part of the music will show up, or it won't. And learning to use silence is vital to making good music. So often the most powerful note one can play is a silent one. When silence gets scary, its no different than any other musical element that may be slipping out of control. Hopefully one's choice in dealing with this sort of critical moment will be memorable in a positive way.

There are so many mental states in which I find myself while improvising. The blank minded spirit, open to the cosmos and just beaming in the right stuff is for the most part a myth in my life. It has happened a few times, this is not to say that pure, spiritual inspiration in the form of a silent mind while making music does not occur -- just that its really rare. Oftentimes I find myself more as if I were on the top level of several streams of consciousness, observing the music while at the same time totally in it. There is a part that is making instantaneous decisions, a part involved with the relatively near term, and a part taking a kind of overview. It took a long time to understand and accept this, because all these activities go on at once and all are equally vivid. And that in a context of being a very physical musician. My body has a lot to say, too. When all these levels are happening, it is inspiration.

And when all these levels are ALMOST happening, its a hell of a struggle. When playing solo, sometimes it isn't possible to just go silent. So the lovely, multi-layered being isn't so lovely when out of synch. From the "top" down: the conscious, long term mind unsure of itself (true pain, that), the mid-ground mind searching for the longer view because it isn't being fed that, the instantaneous mind resorting to its repertoire of sure-fire, known gestures, causing the body to be most discomforted. The physical problems of course create waves of self-consciousness that radiate through all the other mental/emotional levels. Waves that don't help at all until somehow they harmonize. (This moment of harmonization often comes at the hands of a musical partner. There it is! We know what we're doing. Or at least we've got a working hypothesis.) When playing alone, the moment of harmonization can be brought about consciously with a willingness to let every level breathe together. Success is never guaranteed, but improvising has a thrill-seeking aspect. If one crashes and burns, its embarrassing, but one can play the next piece. Its not like really getting killed while on skis, and it counts for more.

Up to here, all this riffing and rapping about playing together in groups has been

about improvising when it "works". To define "works" isn't really practical. But its obvious when its happening and when its not. But what happens when its not? So often there are times when a fellow musician just isn't listening. (Yes, of course I too have committed this sin. Who hasn't?) But what to do?? Depends a lot on the personalities involved. To be like a sheepdog, trying gently to nudge the wayward partner back into awareness? To register a protest by finding a way to disrupt? Or to let "nature" take its course and just relax? While the last option is easiest, I dislike it because it leaves the audience stuck with somebody in masturbation land. Boring. So it has been with a frustrated, heavy heart that I have occasionally walked off stage and had a drink at the bar while a partner finished off our duo. (Hour duo is how that felt.)

Often the music that stands up best on recording is not comfortable to make. I think "comfort" is far too over-rated as a value in musical performance. Are you comfortable? No! Why should I be? There's too much going on for comfort. In fact, enjoying the music while making it is a real danger sign. It means that too much energy has been diverted into an audience-like level of listening. We are blessed to live in a time when we can record. Relax and enjoy during the playback. Or suffer like hell. We are also blessed to be able to erase our recordings. And we don't need recordings to know if our music was inspired or not.

So why improvise in the first place? The transcendent feeling one gets from creating inspired music is unmistakable. Back in the days when I was content to be a flute virtuoso life was so much simpler. Too much simpler. The natural impulse to make music is more fundamental to human nature than the impulse to take music. By that oddly Beatle-esque Koan, I'm trying to say that we go through life speaking our words, not reading scripts. (On some levels this is not always completely true, but then again, this is improvising, not a complete philosophy ready to withstand Jesuit-level logical assault.) It is simply natural to make music and one form of doing that is improvising. Improvising gives me the highest level of joy of all the ways of music making that I know. I love free music, and with every fiber of my being, wish that a wider public loved it too.

When improvising, all of life is there to draw from. Louis Armstrong put it so well "What we play is life." Its an endless challenge to confront one's own limits, to not let oneself play those phrases again and again until they stop being "style" and devolve into cliches. To find the balance between exploring ongoing musical concerns and pushing for something new. I've heard it said that a musician can not

create something completely new while playing solo. This was saddening to hear until I realized it was someone talking about himself, putting his personal case forth as a universal value. Case closed. The original is reachable. At our best, we are doing a lot more than just pushing our personal pawns around a musical chessboard. Ego can be very dangerous. While a healthy sense of self is a good thing, a useful base camp and tool for explorations, too much concern for the self cripples. Whether manifested as over-enjoyment while playing or construction of a rigid interior self portrait, the effect is alienation from one's spirit.

And now I suppose I've cornered myself into discussing "spirit". Its what makes us alive. Define it how you will, I'll stick with that. Its the most inspired lick in this solo. Wham! Coda time:

The relationship between composing and improvising is fascinating. Improvising is like composing without erasing. One goes from beginning to end no matter what. When composing, its possible to spend hours, days on a micro-moment. This option to reflect, out of the flow of time, helps develop refined and highly defined choices. But when composing its often a trap to get so involved in the instant that one loses sight of the larger structure. Conversely, when improvising, sometimes the micro-moment isn't explored in total depth, there just isn't time. But one had better keep the larger picture in sight and draw in the details as well as possible while on the fly. So I believe that composing has made me a better improviser and that improvising has made me a better composer.

And now its time to approach that important moment in any improvisation, indeed in any artwork in any media -- the ending. Have I said my piece? I think so. There will be more to say on other days, but this interior dialog has reached its conclusion. What's needed now is a good phrase to go out on. Have you got one?

The Black Equation Form 2

Morgan Craft



So here we are in the year 2008, and I actually agree to sit down and write about being black, American and experimental. The genesis springs from looking at a magazine devoted to challenging, progressive musics from around the world, and seeing their top 50 list for last year and the only black Americans were a rapper, and a jazz man who has been dead for over 30 years. So I bring up this observation about the lack of a black American presence on the avant garde scene under the age of fifty just to see if maybe I'm not paying attention. I'm constantly fed this steady stream of future thinking folks from Germany, Japan, New Zealand,

U.K., Australia, Norway, etc. but when it comes to America all I hear about is the genius that is free folk or if it's black it must be hip hop, jazz or long dead. How many more articles on Albert Ayler do we really need? That isn't a diss, I love Ayler but... And as far as hip hop being the future of black American music, well, let's just say that the things Ornette, Butch Morris, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill, etc talk about, are not the same things that any rapper or producer that I know is talking about. (The exception being perhaps RZA five years ago) And believe me, I'm looking, I'm listening. I really want to eat these words.

Am I missing something or is there really no young black Avantists? Is there a black American avant-garde under the age of fifty? I speak of the black American because that is what I am and that is what I will be no matter where I go. What does the black American musician / artist do now with the space s/he has been given? Hip hop existed, jazz existed, blues existed, the rhythms of improvisation and resourcefulness are present. Also the awareness of European traditions, Asian traditions, and nature inform our approaches. Technology is within reach, the hype of the interconnectedness of individuals is here. What does the black American do with all of this? What do we do now that sample culture is so prominent? What do we do when success comes before an actual gestation period with our materials? Will we still want to create? How many have written about the absolute need of the American artist or thinker or doer to render completely what this space and time has to offer? Emerson and Whitman laid a certain groundwork for being what and where you are and in that comes an expression which is unique. Never mind aping foreign traditions, America is still impressive in scope, scale, confidence and arrogance, and our task as artists is to report on what we see and feel. My question is also: where is the next generation of black artists willing to go into this unknown, fertile wood to come back with the new blueprints we so

desperately need? Oh, everyone is an artist and everyone wants to be famous and get on the festivals, but I wonder how much homework these people do? I thought the "giants" who came before all taught that you must find and develop your own voice. It cannot be a carbon copy of a great, it must be yours. That is how you must contribute to the world. Over and over I seem to meet new folks and I can't understand why they haven't internalized this lesson? How can you love a Coltrane or Miles or Lee Perry or Sun Ra or Grandmaster Flash and not see that they changed the world with their singular outlook and expression. They didn't copy anyone. They invented new traditions on the structures and flesh and bone of old ones. New times demand new tactics. My generation is sitting on all these jewels and it seems like so much time is wasted with how it's gonna look, or what the people are gonna say, or "oh I'm shopping it to the labels." I want to see what the black American under the age of fifty is working on in terms of taking this music, this sound forward. Beyond all the current categories. I want to hear the effort that is there when looking at the future straight up. My generation is still dependent on old guard record labels and the old guard press for affirmation and that pat on the back. I think it's time to start planting our own seeds now. Where is the black American with a magazine dedicated to the new arts and music? Where is the black American writing the book on the Art Ensemble of Chicago or the Black Artists Group or Don Cherry? Seems we have to wait for a European to do it for us. (the George Lewis book on the history of the AACM, "Power Stronger Than Itself" is out and is required reading) Where are the other books in our own words on what makes us do the things we do? Where is the label run by a black American dedicated to more experimental forms of music? There doesn't seem to be any network set up to share ideas and information or just plain spiritual support. Ah, the spirit? Where has it gone? I might hear animated discussions about MAX and LISA, or gushings about how it is to be just off the plane from some festival in Mexico City or Helsinki or Tokyo, but never about that

old dusty spirit. Spirit is what you will need during those lean years of study and practice. Spirit is what you will need when compiling your work in the solitude of a room somewhere with the knowledge that nobody knows you exist. Spirit is what you will need when time finally does catch up to you and you make your statement. Spirit is what you will need to keep working. I write this not out of negativity but rather as a beginning to a new dialogue and action. The playing field is wide open right now and that makes it all incredibly exciting.

Morgan Craft

<http://www.roughamericana.com>

SOUNDS (mp3's) *Morgan Craft*

All sounds made by, on, or through solo electric guitar. All tracks improvised and recorded live.

ALL TRACKS COPYRIGHT 2008 / MORGAN CRAFT

[*pith*](#)

[*that none could*](#)

[*seven days*](#)

[*these*](#)

[*the emisaries*](#)

[*cove*](#)

[*a west is won*](#)

[*moth*](#)

simply things

preen

solitude

Beatboxer Entertainment presents The Hip Hop Subway Series

Terry Kid Lucky Lewis

2007

1st I wanna say thank you so much for all the love the Village Voice showed us. What can I say I am indeed humbled by such a huge article and the amount of support I have received from family, friends, and fans! Check the article at: <http://villagevoice.com/music/0649,john,75213,22.html>

On Sunday Dec 10th 2006 at 6pm The hip hop subway series starts off at Time Square on the back of the "1" train. We will take the 1 train to the Staten Island Ferry. The party then will march to the ferry from the train and jam on the ferry to Staten Island! All vocalists and percussionists are invited to take part in the hottest hip hop jam session in NYC! Human beatboxers, emcees, B-Boys, singers, spoken word artists, dancers and more make up the hottest hip hop subway party. **This is the last Hip Hop Subway Series until February 9th 2007!! So we are inviting all the emcees beatboxers, b-boys, spoken word artist, singers, and all the participants of the previous subway parties as well all newcomers for a huge hip hop finale on December 10th! Come This Sunday to the hottest party in the underground!!** We hope you spread this email to all your friends. I hope to see all my old friends and new ones join in. I am looking forward to some good old fashion hip hop jam session with some of NYC's hottest hip hop artists! Like I always say: There will be **NO drums or kazoos or small portable amps! Pleased do not bring drums there are enough things on the subway you can use to provide a beat!** I look forward to seeing everyone. Also visit www.beatboxerent.net about what we are doing check out some video, look at pics, and we are also available for bookings. For more info contact Kid Lucky at beatboxerent@gmail.com

6pm Sunday December 10th 2006

Meet up on back of 1 train platform at Time Square on the downtown to Staten Island side!

For more info contact Kid Lucky at beatboxerent@gmail.com and visit www.beatboxerent.net for last minute updates.

If interested in booking Beatboxer Entertainment our EPK is
http://www.sonicbids.com/epk/epk.asp?epk_id=80494

This would not even be possible without the backing of our endorsers listed below and all of our participants. Please click on the links below to find out about the great hip hop events happening in New York City:

Off Book Productions <http://www.off-book.com/shockwave/>

Open Thought – www.openthoughtmusic.com

Say Word Entertainment www.saywordentertainment.com

Free Hip Hop Now www.freehiphopnow.com

Jane Lecroy – www.janelecroy.com

Art of Urban – <http://www.artofurban.net>

This is some of the press, video and photographs and stories about The Subway Series

AM New York feature on the Subway Series:

<http://www.amny.com/news/local/transportation/am-rap1102.0,3339167.story>

New York Metro front page

http://ny.metro.us/metro/local/article/Bringing_that_beat_back_on_the_E_train/1200.html

XXL Magazine article about the hip hop subway series

http://www.beatboxing.com/forum_new/forum_posts.asp?TID=1585&PN=1

The L Magazine

<http://www.thelmagazine.com/4/13/critique/critique.cfm?ctype=1>

Columbia Spectator Front page

http://www.columbiaspectator.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2006/04/13/443de8261aec0?in_archive=1

Japanese Press

http://www.nyniche.com/soul/hiphop/10_index_msg.html

subway series II video clip

The Kid vs Kryciss video clip

Baba Israel vs The Kid www.beatboxerent.net/live

amazing Video blog

<http://www.artofurban.net/>

Photo Blog of the subway series (This is one of my favorites)

http://swiss-martian.blogtog.com/archives/5395_1255613932_/132801

Photo Blog of subway series NYC Indymedia.

<http://nyc.indymedia.org/en/2006/02/65276.html>

beatbox website

http://www.beatboxing.com/forum_new/forum_posts.asp?TID=1363&PN=1

Another dope Photo Gallery

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/26365282@N00/sets/72057594104051902/>

dope photo gallery of the subway series

http://clintspaulding.com/index.php?option=com_zoom&Itemid=5&catid=11

--

Terry Kid Lucky Lewis

718-484-7856

beatboxerent@gmail.com

<http://www.beatboxerent.net>



photo by Matt Jamie

RED HEADED STEPCHILD

Improvized Movement & its place in the Arts

by Claire Elizabeth Barratt

director of Cilla Vee Life Arts

(yes, the z in improvized is intentional!!)

2008



photo by Matt Jamie

*In my experience of life as a movement artist, I have begun to realize that movement, especially improvized movement – even more so, improvized movement within the context of Performance Art – REALLY IS the "**Red Headed Stepchild**" of the arts that no one quite knows what to do with!*

WELL MEANING RELATIVES

*Many "**well meaning relatives**" will attempt, somewhat awkwardly, to take her under their wing:*

***Uncle Gothic Rock** wants to sleaze her into some bizarre S&M type of freak show.*

***Aunties Avant Garde** and **Intelligencia** like to notice the correlation to an established, recognized yet obscure dance form, such as "Butoh". The **Classical Cousins** desperately want to think the best of her – really they do.*

But her inability to produce something recognizable, concrete, a narrative, a pretty picture – something they can grasp as truth –



photo by Matt Jamie

leaves them highly suspicious.

Brother Open Jam Circle accuses her of being "stuck up" and "alienating herself" when he's just trying to be nice and include her in the party.

"Maybe you'll meet someone who can help you out."

Hip Hop lives next door. He's not related. He gets it. He thinks she's kinda cool.

Doesn't care that much but he'll be around if she wants to hang out.

But *Grandmother Ancient Ritual* (she has Alzheimer's and sees with the eyes of a child) is fascinated. She holds a seance and calls on history's tribal elders. They ordain the *Red Headed Stepchild* as a Prophet and a Visionary. They claim her as a milestone of evolution. They warn her that her journey is a lonely one.

(Should she pioneer on? Go back to school to study for a more lucrative career? Devote her life to a kind, compassionate occupation with animals or poor, starving children?)

VENUES & SITE SPECIFIC MOVEMENT

".....But this is not a good space for dance." ".....We don't do dance performances here....." ".... I can put you in touch with some local dancers who know about dance venues in town....."

These are typical responses I get when approaching many venues I want to perform in.

Most assume that I am a "dancer" who requires a good "dance space" - ie. big, open space with smooth, wooden sprung floors, high ceilings etc.

That's all fine and good, especially if you have a set "piece" that needs a "stage" - like a blank canvas on which to present your work (which I occasionally do.)

But for improvized movement, this kind of blank, open "perfect" dance space makes me feel quite agoraphobic! There's nothing there for me to converse with. I need to have a relationship with the environment, and the more eccentric it is, the more interesting that relationship will be.

I enjoy performing in a place that quite literally "shapes" the movement.

The rough, splintery floor of an old warehouse, the moldy couch in the corner of the coffee shop, the books and knick-knacks on the shelves, the pin-ball machine in the back room of the bar, balancing on a rickety table, being framed by an open doorway, a staircase, a closet, a passageway.

This is the true definition of "Site Specific," that is...

...the performance could not be the same in any other location.

MUSICIANS & MOVEMENT IN SOUND

Believe it or not, there are actually musicians who are quite uncomfortable with dance. As open-minded as they would like to think they are or appear to be!

I get the impression from some musicians that they think dance is not as "important" as music. That dance is not to be taken "seriously". OR that they are intimidated by it.

Some state that they "don't really know how to play for dance", or that it's a "distraction from the music".

To me, (within this type of collaboration)...

DANCE IS AN INSTRUMENT!

In the same way as is a voice, a saxophone, a guitar, a piano. Movement is an equal voice in this composition in real time. It is not a solo being "accompanied" by the music.

Neither is it a puppet "interpreting" the sound.

Why would it be a "distraction" any more than rhythm is a distraction from melody?

Rhythm and Melody are commonly accepted as partners. So it is the same with Movement and Sound.

Another common misgiving is that a dancer needs a catchy tune or rhythm to dance to. NOT SO. Movement is just as capable of exploring abstractions; concepts, moods, colors, textures or of by-passing any cerebral context altogether and plugging into the socket of the moment.

INSTALLATION & MOVEMENT AS VISUAL ART

Exploring the context of Movement as Visual Art, I have developed a movement style I call "Motion Sculpture".

It is, quite literally, the human form as a slow-motion sculpture piece. Incrementally shifting shape.

It is presented as installation, often lasting for several hours. (My definition of installation being: To create or become part of a (conceptually) eternal environment; wherein the audience is free to view / experience in whatever manner and for whatever length of time they wish.)

Yet again, I am misunderstood!

Because these sculptures are made of "real" people, there is the automatic assumption that it is "dance". And with this pre-conceived notion of dance comes the expectation of such things as

choreography, exciting moves, variety and entertainment.

When one complains about the lack of such, it is rather like complaining about the lack of action in a Zen Garden!

*Which leads on to the next variety of individual who does not know where to put the **Red Headed Stepchild....***

CRITICS & REVIEWERS

It usually tends to be dance critics who review my work. The ones who have witnessed a Motion Sculpture - Movement Installation typically give the afore-mentioned response in the Zen Garden analogy.

Something I've noticed about these writers is that they all like to come across as authorities on their given subject. Therefore, they refuse to write about anything they don't have some clever jargon, some carefully prepared vocabulary for.

It seems they are unable to witness something with fresh eyes and innocently tell what they see.

And it seems that no critic is an authority on movement as a pure art form which can be interwoven with sound, image, environment, abstract and narrative in such a way that all merge and fuse until it becomes impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins.

I guess no one's developed any jargon for that yet!

MOVEMENT IN BOXES

In spite of decades of Performance Art spilling out from lofts and basements and cleverly disguising itself as "cutting edge" mainstream in the hope of a crumb or two of funding, and a gathering of on-lookers worthy of the title "audience" - most people still like to feel safe with their little boxes – securely labeled with the lids firmly closed.

They want to cling to their rigid ideas about what "dance" is. When, where and how it is appropriate for "dance" to be "performed".

Most acceptable is the nice little ten minute showcase piece with a beginning, a middle and an end, set to a piece of music – usually recorded. (Or maybe they manage to find a musician to play the piece of music for the performance – with one very stressful rehearsal to get the musician to play it exactly the same way as the recorded music they've been rehearsing with. Yes, I've been there – Ugh!)

The audience of family, friends and boyfriends sit duty-bound in their seats, clap politely at the end, then have a conversation about which party to go to.

Sound Familiar?

*Get out of the boxes and join the **Red Headed Stepchild** in being "homeless"!*

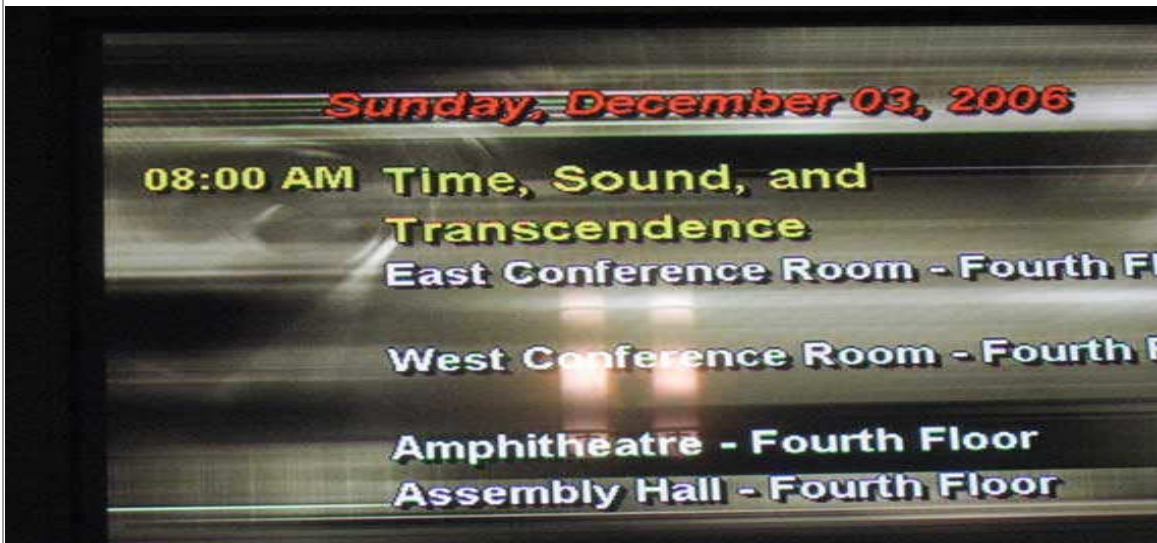
*It's all art, it's all party, it's all ritual, it's all community.
Seamless – it's all life!*

**For more information about Claire Elizabeth Barratt
and Cilla Vee – Life Arts,
go to: www.cillavee.blogspot.com**

isim

International Society of Improvised Music

First Inaugural Conference:



December 1-3, 2006, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

**Time, Sound and Transcendence.
Forging a New Vision for Improvised Music
Pedagogy and Practice**

Featured artists/clinicians:

**Stephen Nachmanovitch, Janne Murto
Steve Coleman, Pauline Oliveros**

by LaDonna Smith

2007

When I first heard about this conference, I said to myself, "O.K. I'm going... I'm up for this." Director **Ed Sarath** in his welcoming remarks first referred back to the "Improvising Across Borders" Conference organized by Dana Reasoning at UCSD, a decade earlier, which many of us remember well, triggering questions such as, "Why do we need to have an organization that's committed to something like this? Is it insane to have to make an organization based around something that is so natural,

that is a model for a life practice, a harmonious experience that offers transcendence for our lives... ? But yet, the experience of coming together as artists and educators is an affirming one, one which allows us to see there is a movement forming not only in the art of improvisation, but in the education of future generations, which is inclusive, more creative, possibly breaking up old modes and methods of music education, testing, and conformities. It is refreshing to carry the torch of change in music education, in which improvisation is the glue and propellant for stimulating, connecting and modeling musical dynamics which span the globe, inclusive of many cultures and modern styles from jazz, electro-acoustic, electronic music, Indian classical music, African, Indonesian, folk, and free improvisation.

The conference call stimulated the response of a diverse collective of educators and artists, most all of whom presented. Hosted by the UM Graduate School, the facility was cozy and intimate, and small enough that the participants were able to mingle and network freely among themselves.



Stephan Nachmanovitch, philosopher, violinist, and author of the book *FREE PLAY* opened the conference with a sensuous and early morning musical meditation on his red e-violin and delay unit, that virtually echoed each phrase as he spun harmonious patterns to complement the sweet lines of his meditation, utilizing low and chorused effects and a contemplative rate of phrasing. His lecture began, as many others throughout the conference, examining concepts of improvisation and critical reflection. His theme: *Improvisation as a Tool for Investigating Reality*.



Unfortunately, I had to exit all too soon, as it was time for me to prepare for my own hands-on workshop in the next hour with local Suzuki students from the Ann Arbor. Clearly, with three events offsetting every hour, there will be no way to adequately cover all. Therefore, this report will include cameo photographs taken by myself and DeJuana McCary-special photographer for **the improvisor** (nothing says it better than a photograph) and other detail and points based on what I was able to observe, as well as mention, or catalog description, of that which went personally unobserved.

PRESENTATIONS: Friday & Saturday

LaDonna Smith, *Improvisation as a Form of Cultural Recreation* is one of my favorite themes. I believe that it would be great to educate the public to its potential as *a national pastime*, just as "baseball" has been unceremoniously dubbed as such, even though I have my doubts as to substantiation for the case of baseball. Given the example and permission to freely express on a musical instrument, anyone can improvise including amateurs and novices, students, professional musicians and virtuoso performers. Therefore, I proposed to work with a group of Suzuki Students, and sit-in with them, orienting them with musical games encouraging spontaneity, listening and compositional skills. They seemed to have a great time, and explored the act of making free music in the moment with great enthusiasm. All in all, a lot of fun, and I believe their parents and teachers were very pleased with the activity.



LaDonna Smith facilitates improvisation with local Ann Arbor Suzuki Students



More workshops, papers and discussions...

In the afternoon, after a lunch break, a study was presented by [Elina Hytonen](#), her ongoing doctoral project concerning the flow experiences occurring in jazz. The flow refers to experiences in which things seem to happen as if on their own. A person in flow can lose his sense of time and place and be so immersed in his activity that he is no longer able to

perceive his surroundings. The study focused on altered states of consciousness and comparing it to meditation through meditation research and interviews with professional jazz musicians.

Music for People was represented by **Eric Edberg**, using approaches by David Darling and Arthur Hull in working with college music students in humanistic, pan-idiomatic improvisation, transcending classical perfectionism and fostering creativity. The session included music making and instruments were welcome. I really wanted to go to this one, but was away from the conference, hung up in parking permit issues with Traffic Control. I'm sure the techniques we were using were similar, inter-personal responses, timing, listening, directions, and punting.

Ed Sarath's *Improvisation, Creativity, and Consciousness: Examining the Transformational Impact of Improvised Music* traces the musical and cross-disciplinary development of the UM Creative Arts Orchestra, including integral basic musicianship class, the BFA in Jazz and Contemplative Studies curriculum, and the campus-wide UM Program in Creativity and Consciousness Studies.

Lee Joiner presented *Moving To and Away from the Score: Integrating Musical Study in the Applied Studio through Improvisation*. What begins as an exercise for identification and deeper understanding may then become an avenue for unique self-expression as well.

Dominic Poccia examined improvisation and creativity from many angles and fields of knowledge. In his first semester Seminar at Amherst, students read and write and discuss improvisation in practice, not limited to music or acting, but with perspective to many broader disciplines, and life.



Thomas Buckner with guest **Claudio Parodi**.

Singer Thomas Buckner gave a short talk about the evolution of his style, techniques and experience with improvisation using both electronic and traditional instruments, and demonstrates these ideas in a performance of Robert Ashley's *The Producer Speaks*, collaborating with Parodi, sharing views on how musical ideas are conceived and developed between partners. Here, he and Parodi are seen taking in a concert at the Canterbury House.

Alan Shapiro presents a paper on how improvisation puts together freedom and order,

originality and tradition, thoughtfulness and intensity, and shows these are opposites that everyone hopes to compose in themselves.

Charity Chan discusses how improvisation enables one to explore and discover the meanings and repercussions of a society that has as its fundamental decisive source, collective individualism. Consequently, Chan believes that sounds of improvisation are the sounds of "the individual citizenry acting as a whole."

Michale Heffley presents a retrospective of audio and video recordings from two decades of ethnomusicological fieldwork and research selected for the ways they crossed and transcended culture, genre, time, place, race, class, gender, politics, and mundane consciousness, and how he incorporated similar improvisational strategies into his own work.

O.K. that was a sample of some of the themes that participants were working with. Now here is a nice shot of ISIM Director, Ed Sarath, speaking with Professor Emeritus Pauline Oliveros moments before her evening presentation.



Ed Sarath and featured artist and bard, Pauline Oliveros

Keynote Guest: Pauline Oliveros

As the Friday evening event featured esteemed keynote artist, **Pauline Oliveros** who asks, **"What could be more transcendent than an improviser who is living in Beirut improvising with bombs?"** Her eyes search the audience, who sits contemplating the question, with a glazed silence.

She tells of the grass roots improvising scene in Beirut, and indeed all over the world, there are young people engaging in free improvisation. "It's grown so amazingly," she says. She tells the story of the amazing Mazen Kerbaj (extended techniques-trumpet) sitting on the front porch of his flat improvising to the distant (and not so distant) sound of bombs during the Israeli invasion of his city. She plays the clip and asks students from the Creative Arts



Orchestra to pick up on the feelings and sensations of this music and imagine for themselves to be sitting on your own balcony while your neighbors are being bombed. She invites the audience to also be thinking "What would I do?" "What if this were my situation?" "How would I respond?" Could I transcend this moment of fear and unknown and respond in a creative way?" Would I be able to capture the message embedded in the soundscape, and transform the situation into one of connecting with the sound?

After performing on her grande Titano accordian, Pauline Oliveros gives us a short history of her involvement with early collaborators Terry Riley, Stuart Dempster and Loren Rusch at KPFA in Berkely when there were only reel to reel tape machines in the 50's, soundtracks were being made for film, and they would meet at KPFA, improvise together, and develop the process. For her, the signature of the 20th century is recording, being able to track and listen to what you do, and you get immediate feedback. She began to use improvisation as a way to teach musicianship. "Friends you make in the interesting discovery process are quite wonderful! Long musical friendships are a profound and wonderful part of my life!" She attributes a dynamic change in musicianship to technological development.

Back to the bombs, Michael Bulloch posts an mp3 clip of "Starry Night" by Mazen Kerbaj, the Lebanese improviser (trumpet). We listened to this Israeli bombing taking place, as he was sitting on his balcony during the incident. The next night, he improvised with the bombs. This is an example of the "transcendence" theme. You can hear this music for yourself on Kerbaj's site <http://crackle.org/mazen.htm> Mazen's mp3 excerpt is [here](#).

Pauline's next subject was the *Sonorus* Festival in Mexico City, where she was working with the theme "Sounding the Borders" referencing all the news that has been pertaining to the border between Mexico and the U.S.A. She speaks of *direct* music making such as body lapping, voice, hand clapping, and bone flutes stating that "bone flutes is a technology." The air stream is removed and distant from the body. As with any instrument, you can explore the distancing that has developed.

"We are in an era in need of an exponential rise in technology, all of which has distanced us from the body. People are more and more quiet. It's hard to get them to use their voice! The Silence response is very loud, and is related to this distancing. In bone flute, there is a border that is crossed to make sound that is not coming from the vocal cords. Music from electronics was more related to my central nervous system, but again in instruments, there is a distance." Ask yourself, "What part of your body is this an extension of?" And so, feel that relationship.

She told us a story of "Playing the Wall" in which Glen Whalen went to Nogales in order to amplify the wall between the U.S.A. and Mexico, to make the border a musical instrument! Of course the officers showed up, wanting an I.D. and wanted to know "what you are

doing?" He told them. The Border Patrol was very interested and decided that Glenn would make it famous! Instead of representing separation, the music of the wall could become a metaphor for unification. He changed a lot of minds!

So Mazen Kerbaj and Glenn Whalen represent improvisors taking a pathway, taking something we really love, and changing the world.

She then asked the students of the University of Michigan Creative Arts Orchestra to play your impression of the borders, and see if you can change the border into something that is unifying. This was an amazing experience we all witnessed, as we tracked the subtle changes in the music.

There was time for discussion and dialog. The students expressed their discomfort with the suggestion, yet the transformative experience of doing the exercise. Mark Dresser instigated a very lively discussion over the authenticity of the Beirut clip. With Pro Tools anything can be done. Does this devalue the it? The discussion followed a heated path in favor of the authenticity of the life experience vs. creating and fabricating in the studio. Mention was made of the work of Jon Rose bowing the fences in Israel. The Police also came. They weren't as friendly. You can read more about Jon Rose and some of his experimental fence performance by clicking [here](#).

Finally, Oliveros closed the two hour session with a "Tuning Meditation" which utilized the entire audience, an interesting piece for exercising the intuition, getting centered, relaxed, breathing with and listening to the whole field of sound. "We tune in many ways. Tuning is metaphorical. We tune to our environment. We tune in many ways. Turn your attention inward to find your own tuning. Tune to the whole field, going from focused attention to global attention to the whole field. Listen inwardly and listen to everyone else. The tuning Meditation is an important metaphor for negotiations and understanding differences. She is telling us about a huge tuning meditation involving many countries and people that she is planning for 2007. Go into analysis of this activity and feeling, and sensations of this activity." Much on the life and work and news of Pauline Oliveros to be found [here](#).



Pauline Oliveros on Titano

On Saturday, the keynote session opened with **Janne Murto**, special guest from Sweden, and *ISIM* featured presenter: *Sound & Silence - Calming the Mind with the Effects of Sound*.

Murto contends that for an improviser, it is essential to stay fully in the present moment when performing. In the middle of a jazz solo, there is no room for the mind to wander. Intuition, creativity, leadership and listening skills are also needed. With meditation and simple Art of Living practices, it is possible to calm the mind and tap more into the creativity within. It's a pity that I was late, and walked in during a silent group meditation, to which I carefully slipped right back out the door, and proceeded to try to resolve another parking issue, waiting until the next session to "arrive".

Shortly thereafter, I was able to have a mini-impromptu musical session with Stephen Nachmanovitch and Thomas Buckner in the Assembly Room. Two violinists, a vocalist, and for a while, a percussionist (please identify yourself) too. It was one of those rare spontaneous moments, that we've spent practically the entire conference talking about. Seizing the moment and making a personal connection in musical terms.



Violinists LaDonna Smith and Stephen Nachmanovitch

At 11:00 I had to make a difficult choice between **David Borgo**, where many composers and musicians were gathered to hear *Sync or Swarm: An Ecological Approach to (Improvised) Music*. The program states that "Our ways of investigating music in the past have often neglected its performance, reception, and ultimately its meaning. Borgo wryly comments, "The score is no more the music than a recipe book is a meal." In his presentation, he references the contemporary scientific and cultural paradigm shift and argues for an ecological understanding of music that refuses to separate it from its temporal, embodied, social, and cultural dimensions.

I went instead to witness **Eric Barnhill** demonstrate the *Dalcroze Pedagogy: Breaking Out*

of the Classroom Box Through Improvisation in Rhythmic Movement, Solfege, and Piano. For me, as a teacher of violin to young children, this was a fascinating and inspiring study that I had not previously been exposed to. A musical subject was taught through rhythmic movement and solfege rhythmique. The same subject was then taught as though to a class of four year olds, using the same Dalcroze Methods. The eight or so participants had a blast, learning in children's shoes. It was fun. It was challenging. It stimulated us. We even got to dance! Barnhill was an excellent facilitator and instructor and inspired me to learn more from the Dalcroze techniques.



Dalcroze clinician Eric Barnhill with UM Dean Betty Anne Younkers

**Panel Discussion: Alan Bern, Karlton Hester,
Maud Hickey, Betty Anne Younker,
Moderator: Ed Sarath**

Another highlight of the Conference, for me, of which there was far too little time, was the panel discussion at noon on Saturday. Each panelist began with introductions that led to pressing issues of their own, dealing with improvisation.



Moderator, Ed Sarath began with a comparative metaphor of the effectiveness of Calcium and Music Education. That Calcium without phosphorus, zinc and magnesium is not well absorbed. Music Education without an equal part of improvisation leaves us with very little support for the creative side of the musical experience. I thought that was a great analogy!

Maude Hickey introduced herself as a "recovering improviser" and preceded to support the previous metaphor with another question, "What if we taught visual art in public school like we taught music?" Would it not be very much like paint by number? The National Standards for Education now instruct that improvisation should be a mandatory part of the education syllabus. Children should be able to create melodies, make an accompaniment, etc. Her question is, "Is it an IT, or is it a process". Should we be grading IT, or creating with the process? Language turns the world into "things". We all know the world is not "things". Then what is "IT"? So, what is "skill" in improvisation? Is it "No child left untested?" Is it to be victim of the same reductionism as half notes, quarter notes, rests? Look at a beginning Band book. Hot Cross Buns? How do we deal with good and bad? How can we help the student to get better at it? Should students get better at improvisation? Jazz? But what about free improv? It is a real way for students to play music. It is high risk, but yes, high risk can be high yield. Improvisation needs to be in the curriculum. What about now? Maude Hickey concludes and challenges all of us, ***"Knock on the door! Do more workshops!"***



Panel: Alan Bern, Ed Sarath, Maud Hickey, Karlton Hester and Betty Anne Younker

Karlton Hester "Music is a mirror of society and environment. The question is, "How far do we have to go to get back to living naturally? There's so much cancer, so many barriers. What about introducing the notion of improvisation into analytical thinking, rather than the current notion that it is unrelated to analytical thinking. Life is poly-dimensional. Are we breaking down the barriers so life will flow more naturally? There's nature's forest and pygmies and their life style reflects where they come from. The western environment we live in, we reflect that. It's a complex issue. If you measure things according to the influence they have, it's not that simple. Jazz is a music that came out of a situation of oppression, but with it came freedom. "Jazz is blues, Beethoven is free, there's *free everything!* Humans have different backgrounds, different coping methodologies, so it will take a variety of approaches. In the 60's perspective was more open, but later things began closing off again. What's the music of the last 25 years? In the early 20th century, styles were designations for types of improvised music. There was ragtime, swing, bebop, but at 2000 there's a change. There's no name for the music. There are so many variants now, all individual voices."

Betty Anne Younker Dean at the University of Michigan, introduces herself as a classical flutist, with no experience with improvising until now. She raises many questions. "How do we do this differently than 40-50 years ago? We know the arts cause us to experience things through feeling and on a subjective level that evokes affect. When are the students the facilitators and when are we the learner? We must be more responsible as to when we are shifting in that role. She brings up more key points that get in the way:

1. *Control* is the challenge. Power. Flip the coin.

2. *Packaging* Pick a method of music education. Orff, Kodaly, Dalcrois, Band Method, Suzuki.

We pick a package to make it easy. The real area should be gray. Can improvisation be a link to that?

3. *Lack of Faith* that students think they can construct something musically. We get in their way too much. When do we provide guidance, and when do we step away? Not like we currently do it:

The "How-to-gotta-do-this" syndrome: making a checklist of criteria based on technique, history, etc.

4. *The Conservatory Model* is strong in music, theater and dance. There's the academic, teacher trainees, forms and conventions. Then what do we do? We let in the Jazzers! Then the electronic musicians! Then technology! Then the free-jazzers and free-thinkers! Wooooo! Now what?

So in Music Ed, maybe there's room to improvise here, with curriculum. There are a lot of boxes.

We have to share each others intentions. Effective pedagogues have faith and trust in their students.

We must also have faith in a new paradigm, and a new process.



Alan Berg Why Improvise? What is improvisation? It is carbon. In contrast to notated music (a representation of sound) the notated music is a map. It is never to be confused with the territory. Never be confused that a notated score is music. So we make a catalog of musical gestures. What can you do? Develop a symbolic system of notation for this?? Can you scratch the string? Can you bow long? We understand the world representationally. A photograph of the Eiffel Tower in Paris from the classic long view doesn't tell you anything about the experience of being on the Eiffel tower, the nuts, the bolts, the sensation of height when you are at the top looking down, the feeling of the wind creaking and swaying the tower.. We are "endangered" for accepting the world through representation! Catalogs, ads, articles, etc. capitalistic points of view...notation, publishing! Only after I was "post-literate" did I understand what I was missing. Berg questions the rise of post literate musicianship, and writing for people who you know. And asks us "How do we do this? To recover our morality in a nuts and bolts kind of way with literacy, and the dominance of literacy in all our musical relationships? I believe, improvisation is recovering the territory of music. Having recovered the territory, one can approach the maps to the territory. If we want to turn out individuals, we have to get back to the territory, not the maps. That is crucial."

Following the stimulating introductory rounds, there was little time for discussion, a pity, because there were many hands raised to follow! THIS could have truly been a two hour session, *as the many dozens of hands flew up, and there was no time left!*

Next, I will try to detail an amazing presentation on Saturday that was just outstanding, and most inspiring of all to me. Presented by **Karlton Hester**, *Hesterian Musicism* was a spellbinding and fascinating exploration of music as a minute reflection of the universe and spontaneous composition as an opportunity to examine the functions that govern the universal order. With beautiful power point examples from his upcoming book from Binghamton Press (a must have), Karlton Hester examines natural cycles, patterns of evolution, and the potential relationship between all universal phenomena. That which is continuous contains all forms. He quotes from *The Mysticism of Sound and Music: The Sufi Teaching of Haszrat Inayat Khan*, "*Music is Life itself.*"

According to Hester, "Improvisations, or Creations become Spiritual Rituals. "Ritual" itself is a word also contained in the word "spiritual". There are both ancient and modern transcendental aspects of the physical and spiritual worlds. Rituals have become absent from the approach to musical teaching. Energy is continuously expanding and contracting in motion. There are both the Big Bang and the Steady States Theories of the beginnings of the Universe. The secret of composition lies in sustaining a tone as solidly and as long as possible through all it's different degrees. The Cleansing Breath is when breathing gives a psychological releasing of all that hangs on us. Musical Interaction is like experimentation with particles in science. Particle spin, also in Music, there is ensemble and partial (or spin)

and it will effect what everybody else plays. Energy moves form just as Musical Partners. Throw one pebble in the lake, and it sets up concentric rings. Throw another pebble into the lake, and it acts on the patterns of the first pebble, and on it goes. There is a quality produced by the vibrations affected.

African Music is based on Tonal Languages and that's why the drums came about. Drums are not the dominant force in African music. Language is. The drums are imitating the language. So Blacks modified traditional musical instruments in the United States so they could talk more. They came up with mutes, slides, the banjo. European instruments became modified and extended to accommodate a poly-dimensional Afro-centric musical language.

The 21st century musician inherits an exciting world of direct access to an unprecedented amount of interesting, ancient, traditional and new music. More than we can assimilate! But in current educational practices, NOT before establishing one's own style, students must first examine vast and varied legacies of music and study, assimilate and digest, and finally in the 12th grade, maybe get around to your own music?? What's me? This is too long a process!

Children blend into multiplicity. They learn through repetition. It's more analog than digital. But as in the law of nature, there is *infinite variation*. Nature produces not symmetry, but more variation. How many snowflakes are alike? How many fingerprints? Blues changes are changes. Every player changes differently. The Creators patterns of vibrational and mathematical proportions are closely related to the overtone series (the microcosm) and parallels mathematical systems and distances in astronomical phenomena. Pi, the Fibonacci Series, the Golden Mean, are all seen in nature as *flexible* balance.

We try to theorize about the essence of life, but such theories remain as far removed from absolute proof, just as music can be analyzed into systems, but it's power cannot be explained. The math we use is to get a grip on the cycles of life, calendars, clocks, time-space, but why do we have to have a leap year?

Tension and release and consequent creation in Nature is reflected in music as tension and release. Breathing in and Out. Intestines push the food forward. Polar opposite forces move in a way to propel things forward. Harmonic-melodic-rhythmic are systems of tension and release. We have a history of music that is Euro-centric, African or twenty first century. Tension and release: Spirituals are loose, ragtime is tight, blues is loose, swing is tight, bebop is loose, cool is tight, free jazz and on and on... The Rosicrucians saw the Universe as a whole with infinite subdivisions. We simplify by tracking the similarities of things. What is motivic development: tracking an idea, giving compositions an organic unity, reflection learning by repetition, but there is variation within a whole. Look at the Circle of Fifths, for example. Again, variation within a whole.

For expression, you have to keep it open. What's the most important thing to do in life? To be! In music, just reflect whatever you live! To be in the moment, you have to be yourself.

Theory always follows practice".



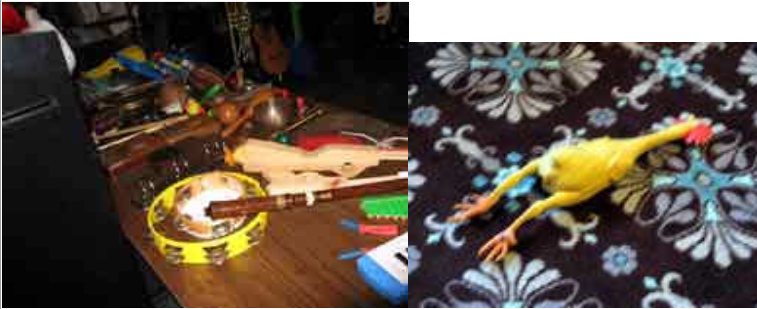
SUNDAY begins with the inspired performance of
Gene Nichols, Duane Ingalls and Les Trois Etoiles . . .



These freewheeling improvisers manifest the spirit of make-do-for-oneself-with-what-you-got. Musical representatives of down east rural Maine, and their menagerie of found objects and instrumental home-mades in a soire that rocks the room. Originating in 1985, homegrown improvisational activites/potluck/rural therapy, these sessions are an example of



what can happen.



Les Trois Etoile's found objects, miscellaneous instruments, toys, home-mades and uh...rubber chicken!

In the West Room, **Mark Miller** presents *Something from Nothing, A Buddhist Inspired Approach to Teaching Improvisation*. Buddhist inspired training in improvisation is the foundation of the performing arts curriculum at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. This training is guided by three tenets of Zen Practice: Not Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Taking Action.



Music Director Stephen Rush at the Canterbury House Father Hamilton

Stephen Rush and **Father Reid Hamilton** discuss the "Jazz Mass" that is presented each Sunday at the Canterbury House, co-creating liturgies from free improvisation, using music by Albert Ayler, Sun Ra, Ornette Coleman, Sonny Sharrock and other jazz artists as an integral part of improvisational worship. They bring up the Christ-ian aspects of music of these matters mentioning Lori Anderson and the role of Silence (Cage) and acceptance, compare Billy Budd to Jesus, guru of modernism and point out a limitation of identity. They show us that Ayler, Alice Coltrane (Hindu), and Sun Ra (who was really out there) are practicing religions and spirituality in a beautiful way. As Ornette Coleman creates "Harmelodics" or the idea of a cosmic unison. We are all part of the unison, not the parts. Harmelodics inspires the art of preaching. Jazz Preaching at the Canterbury House is the practice. A liturgical service is a chart. To take a scripture and ideas about a Saint and then

improvise the message, responding to both the music and the worshippers to be "in the moment".

Paul Bendza runs an interactive workshop for working on technical and interpersonal skills necessary for making good chamber music, to encourage and develop individual and collective sensitivity, communication, and rapport among the members of an ensemble, and provide an effective environment for exciting and inspired performances to a receptive audience.

1. He begins by passing a large ball around a circle of participants. It represents our energy, in passing around, inhale to receive and exhale when you pass it. Never receive in the gut, but keep passing the energy, representing dynamics and other motivic musical elements.
2. Pass spoken word or sonic vocal gestures, include hand gestures, facials and body language.
3. Notice that in good improvisations there is a.) shadowing-one player or singer leads, and the other shadows right on your tail b.) pass and switch roles sonically and vocally or c.) shift leadership right in the middle.
4. Soloist and accompaniment: a.) vocalese b.) and somewhere in the middle switch roles, to keep the energy moving c.) can do in threes, two people accompany one solo, which will give a more complex dynamic d.) or two people start, and a third enters and then one drops out, so the duet can
Paul Bendza
move around in a circle.
5. High level contrasts, loud and soft, and then at the center would be the same dynamic. Making a piece in the shape of an X. The person who starts loud ends soft, the one who starts soft ends loud. Maybe use with fast and slow, high and loud: soft and low, variations.
6. Imitation: Beat Box: Put together a little band. Do a little loop, next imitates first one, teaches a new one to the next person, then go back and do your own. Go round in the circle, loops adding up..
- b.) Then add a soloist, someone jumps to the center. c.) you could turn the circle outward and it would be less apparent it were a circle.
7. Put someone at the piano. Put a card on the piano making a suggestion, such as "Sunrise" or "Evening", "Clusters", or make up titles like "Street Talk" or "Magic."
8. Then introduce Graphic Scores which move toward Improv Class where...
9. Suggestions follow like maybe, "enter without beginning" or "exit without ending"...
10. Exercise to relieve stress, like the effect of using the ball.
11. Learning to phrase on one breath (or one bow), or do as much melodically as you can on one breath.
12. Get the picture?



Simultaneously, North Carolina jazz scholar and free music enthusiast, **Mark Medwin** elaborates on the work of **Bill Dixon**, trumpeter and composer. I heard part of this. Medwin is a true music aficionado and expert on this neglected artist. He explores pedagogy in two of Dixon's 1970's ensemble pieces and their place in the current history of improvised music. He is assisted by Ian M. Davis, producer and proprietor of Assembled Sound, also from North Carolina, plays the sound cuts for the comparative study.

At some point, I cut out early to go over to the Canterbury House, to help Pauline pack up her stuff for the airport, and was able to hear the last part of her concert & discussion with **Thomas Ciufo** on *Just Intoning*, a graphic score written for Oliveros and computer mediated instruments in an improvisational context.



Mark Baszak and Napoleon Maddox *At the Crossroads of Jazz, Rap, and Hip-Hop*

examines music pioneered by African Americans, fusing elements of jazz and hip-hop, with a look to the origins and practices. Hip Hop is now the most popular and influential music in the world, yet many are just beginning to understand its cultural and artistic significance, Bazak claims. "Hip-hop reflects the world around us by honoring music of the past-using instruments of technology to sample and combine bits and pieces of older music to create something new. Baszak poses the question,

"Is free style rapping the equivalent to jazz improv? Mentioning Wallace Roney, states that it is alike compositionally, but does jazz improv require more virtuosity? But, lyrical virtuosity is also a fact. Heavy literature with the impact of Shakespeare in his time, can be found. Charley Parker is recognized to be at the highest level of musicianship. You are dealing with components in Hip Hop that use a narrow range of melody, whereas Parker used a higher range of melody, but Emcees are dealing with a lot of information, delivered very rhythmically and very quickly.

Quoting from hip hop artist Russell Gunn, "Hip hop is not just rap, it's improv over rhythm. Jazz musician's can improv over hip hop rhythm. Freestyle rappers is to Hip-hop what free improv is to jazz," Napoleon Maddox chimes in, "...without validating one music over another. In many ways, we devolve both of them. There's a great social relevance to how Charlie Parker played. He was from his time. As a technique that is shared with jazz, is that people are organizing literature with a musical base. You have to listen for the improv of the text., but also the improv of how it's delivered. No two performances will ever be the same. Each time can be different.. to change a word in free style, can make a huge difference. There are different ways to improvise within the moment."

Napoleon Maddox



Baszak plays examples of Miri Ben-Ari, the hip hop violinist (Universal 2005) and Doug E. Fresh (beatbox). I am amazed by the virtuosity. "There is potential in where we haven't gone to, taking advantage of the marriage of the two, jazz and hip hop. We don't have solid relationships. What makes music great is collaborations and musical relationships. Sure, there is attitude, but then, it is still very experimental, not yet long-term, but there's good chemistry, and interlocking relationships over the

years. People need to develop relationship that lasts long enough to take the music to a new level.

Other notable examples cited were *The Life We Chose*, by **Iswhat** (Hyena, 2006) with Jack Walker(talk-rap) and **Napoleon Maddox** (verses/beatbox), Jac (tenor sax),Daniela Castra(verse), Chris Comer (keys), Casual T (cutting and scratching). Krunk Jazz with Russel Gunn and Bionic has jazz improv soloing elements. (CD Baby) and a track from Sonic Trance "Shabba Unranked" has hip hop artists sampling artists and musicians. Niki Giovanni is one of the women. There was a set in 1980 with Max Roach was a true meeting of expressive art, rather than *fusion*, or trying to blend styles.

Many PERFORMANCES hidden in the days:

The **Canterbury House** across the street behind the Rackham Building hosted performances throughout, as lectures were held on the 4th floor of the Graduate School, so a choice of lecture or performance was always having to be made. Among the Canterbury performances included the sonic textures and rhythmic structures of **Backgammon**. The members are Jonathan Kirk with Casey Farina, Thron Humsiton, Steve Syverud, Mathew Golimbisky and Caroline Davis. From the vintage Arp Odyssey to contemporary laptops and saxophone the ensemble seeks to embrace the legacy of electronic music. **This Little Abomination of Ours** includes **Michael Nickens**, **Chuck Navyac** and **Ross Huff**.

Opposite my lecture on Friday, (which I clearly was not present for) was a performance of **Alan Bern and the Cincinnati Composers Group**, as well as a performance of Loop-Based and Digital Musical Production with **Paul Scea** (laptop & woodwinds) and **Arthur White** (guitars and saxophone). Other performances of the day included *The Art of Taking it Out* by **Dom Minasi** and **Ken Filiano**, a solo acoustic bass piece by **Michael Bullock**, and solo piano improvisations by **Michael Jeffrey Stevens**.



Michael Jeffrey Stevens



Sarah Weaver



Michael Bullock



Ken Filiano



Andrew Bishop



James Ilgenfritz



Also performing in the Canterbury House, **James Ilgenfritz Trio** featuring **Stephen Rush** and **Andrew Bishop**, **LaDonna Smith** solo, **Paul Scea** and **Arthur White**. **Michael Bullock**



Claudio Parodi, Eric Barnhill, LaDonna Smith



Thomas Ciufo explains

Claudio Parodi presented one hour sound journey on a self- modified electronic instrument, utilizing old equalizer sliders, old multi-effects racks, frequencies and cracks caused by the rust of the rack knobs, different impedences and other on-off adlimentation.

Joe Giardullo presented *The Great Rift*, exploring the multiple qualities of the soprano

saxophone.

Gojogo- Sarah Jo Zaharako features music combining western sounds of classical and jazz with the rhythmic traditions of India, blending and incorporating global musical styles.

Composer **Rocco Di Pietro's** *The Lost Project* is a series of works based on the musical monograms of lost children. Performed by **Larry Marotta**, **David Reed**, and **Derek Zoladz**.



DSS: Drake, Streb, & Stearns at Canterbury House

I was impressed with a young group from Los Angeles, California that interested me with their live FM radio transmission of electronically altered violist **Cassia Streb** by two DIY electronics wizards **Philip Stearns** and **Aaron Drake**. Each member can affect the timbre, amplitude and internal processes of the other players, and broadcast their transmissions, collectively known as **DSS**.

Other notable sets were performed by **Matt Endahl** and **Symbology**, the Ann Arbor pianist and composer's new group, improvising with explorations of states of mind. **Golden Age**, an improvisational hip-hop troupe from Madison, Wisconsin and **Everyone a Pope**, a jazz fusion ensemble fronted by trumpeter Ross Huff and featured some of Ann Arbor's most enthusiastic improvisers.

I continue with just a listing of the other significant conference performances in the Assembly Room and Amplitheaters.

AACM Creative Youth Orchestra founded and lead by **Nicole Mitchell** features Chicago based musicians between 13-22 years old. As a new program of the AACM School of Music, the AACM Creative Youth Orchestra provides young musicians the opportunity to develop a diversified approach to learning ensemble and improvisational skills, which include jazz, classical and creative music concepts. The orchestra ranges in size between 15-20 students and a variation of instrumentation.

Walter Thompson and **Sarah Weaver** demonstrated Sound Painting, the universal live composing sound language created by New York based composer, Walter Thompson for musicians, actors, dancers, poets and visual artists working in the medium of structured improvisation. Mark Dresser, James Ilgenfritz, and members of the Chicago-based Weave Soundpainting Orchestra served as the demonstration ensemble.



Jane Ira Bloom soprano sax & live electronics and bassist

Mark Dresser teamed up to perform compositions from Bloom's recent Artistshare CD "Like Silver, Like Song" in which the sax and bass use live electronics as part of their improvisational sound palette.

Wojciech Konikiewicz, is joined by percussionist **Michael Gould** and bassist **Pat Prouty** in a mixture of performance, workshop and spoken manifest, including poetry, discussing his personal concept and philosophy of improvised music in the twenty first century.

Saturday evening's featured guest artist, **Steve Coleman (saxophone) & Five Elements**, performance of Coleman's musical meditations based on the belief that each Soul has it's basis in Spirit, an enormous two hour work utilizing the **UM Creative Arts Orchestra**.



Steve Coleman's *Five Elements* performed by UM Creative Arts Orchestra

Cornelius Dufallo, *Realeyes* scored for violin, electronics, and hemispheric speaker system was a thirty minute meditation on the search for peace. Exploring concepts of destruction, absence, and transcendence, juxtaposing hypnotic "sound breath" with moments of harsh dissonance, improvisations and extended techniques.

Jeff Morris demo of his own software tools for improvisation including Elektrodynamik-counterpoint inspired by the implications of the Special Theory of Relativity Gamepad-a sampling instrument based on a gamepad controller.

Ken Filiano, Connie Crothers, Andrea Wolper -(bass, piano, voice) performed in the Assembly Hall, experimenting with the sonic capabilities of their respective instruments.

Nicholai Zielinski guides the University of Michigan, **Creative Arts Orchestra** through *The Holsum Family Fiscal Planner*, a modular composition consisting of musical and textual ideas cued in differing combinations to make a "living" piece of music.



E3Q, is comprised of cellist Katri Ervama, drummer Michael Gould and trumpeter-electronicist Mark Kirschenmann, all are on the faculty of the **University of Michigan**.



Sylvia Smith (percussion-voice) and **Carrie Rose** (flute-dance) gave a trans media performance including props, dance, sound, and humor of *Transitions and Leaps* from an ideographic notated score by **Stuart Saunders Smith**.

To finish, there was the final Canterbury performance (although we were all invited to the **Jazz Mass** that would commence after the conclusion of the conference) was with **Thomas Ciufo** and **Pauline Oliveros**, mentioned earlier, of which there are great pictures of the discussion.



In conclusion,

"Call down the water for the corn.

Create flow and Spirit.

Call down the rain.

Music flow."

~ Remember the present~

LaDonna Smith

12/26/06



Gene Nichols applauding at finish of conference

for more information on the **International Society of Improvised Music**,
please visit: <http://isim.edsarath.com/>

Improvisation Texts

Jim Hearon

2007

(straightforward, somewhat serious)

You will be a great success socially and
in some artistic calling.

You will be a great success both in the
business world and in society.

Your temporary financial embarrassment
will be relieved in a surprising manner.

In the beginning, something has to happen.

Question: How do I begin?

Answer: Play only short notes.

Duration: The exercise lasts for twenty seconds.

(Exercise 1. Short Notes)

(a good strategy to employ at the beginning is to ask more questions.)

Inner World of the Garden Glove.

Is that really a renown florid hot lavender egg?

Wanker Pastorate.

Who wears pork sealant?

Which earnest raw polka?

Masks of Glory Island.

Which ark of syllogism sand ?

Who's glossary of sand milk?

Which dry folksong salamis?

What sly ass flora kingdom?

Is that your garland of silky moss?

Where are the frisky modal slogans?

Context

Represents aspects of the setting or situation when improvisers come together for the purpose of improvising. It includes the physical environment of the performance, as well as instrumental, biological, cultural and personal aspects as well.

emotional, economic, time, space, approach, vocalist, instrumentalist, environment, general, institutional, political, cultural, demographic, composer, professional, virtuoso, attitude, competition, familial, conductor, amateur, novice, folk, nationalistic, solo, ensemble, teacher, religion, student, electronic, acoustic, technological, instrumental, musical, other arts, personal, properties, potentialities, mood, scene, values, styles, history, seasonal considerations, personality, lunar phases, familiarity, relationships, live

performance, disposition, temperament, location

Decision(choice)/Action Evaluation/Direction

as bipolar 'valve' and further reduction of the six categories where the individual makes choices or decides to make a sound, then evaluates that sound,

and chooses a direction based on that perception.

The evaluative process is actually an a multileveled awareness such that many things take place in an around that moment, including the subjective and the objective, personal and impersonal, etc. which help determine the direction.

Essentially then the process moves from the inner world into the physical world where it is evaluated (from within), and then set free again, and again.

The goal should be to make decisions which are not based upon perceptions altered exclusively by personal assumptions, but rather upon accurate evaluation of the physical phenomenon of the moment.

Context

time, space, environment, personality, relationships, live performance, disposition, temperament, location

Content

Content is the process which take place, and is represented by the music of the improvisation. There may be many processes at work in an improvisation. Among the several important aspects of content are momentary responses, expressed in the moment, as well as projection and retrospection of content.

automata, sampling, found objects, natural music, instrumental technique, idiomaticism, ideation, compositional technique, intelligent body, disorganization, deconstruction, chaos, visualization, color, unpredictability, musical styles, literary allusions, patterns, anarchy, amorphousness, guidelines, synesthesia, plans, schemas, free form, projection, topology, restrictions, original instruments, engines, representation, illustration, modeling, descriptions, gestures, quote, sound garden, clock time, essence, reduction, expansion, traditional compositional practices, path

WAYS TO PLAY:

Play a note as high as possible on your instrument

Listen and play sounds which blend with the texture

Play a loud, high pitch

Play intricate, rhythmically complex passages

Play a long, low note

Start playing fast, energetic phrases

Stop playing and listen

Play several short notes in different registers with varied dynamics

Play a part which is subsidiary to the others

While playing, watch someone else play and try to match their physical gestures.

Play a cadenza-like passage

Play harmony

Play loud

Play soft

Play a loud, abrupt sound, and repeat it

Play a melody in a mode

Play atonally

Play only intervals

Play minimally

Play stochastically

Play, then stop, then respond to someone else

Play like a rock star

Play like you're in pain

Be happy and sound like it

Play something sad

Play fast

Play grievously

Play aggressively

Play with angst

Play lustily

Stay low and groovy

Get in a groove

Be funky

Play classical

Play jazz

Play blues

Be blue

Get down

Get up

Stay high

Play a major seventh

Sustain a minor triad

Play two melodies at once

Play a melody with implied harmony

Jump up

Play hip

Play cool

Be cool

Spank it

Tear it

Stroke it

Work it

Tear it up

Bleed a little

Be sorry

Be pathetic

Wake up

Get it on

Play an arpeggio

Play a chord

Gliss down

Gliss up and down

Gliss up

Trill

Tremolo

Trill then tremolo

Play harmonics

Play overtones

Play as soft as possible

Play sweetly

Be a hero

Solo

Be subdued

Dig

Build

Climax

Reach

Experience

denouement

Level off

Retreat

Move

Forward

Work it out

Work it in

Stand up

SOUNDS TO MAKE:

Pop

Click

Tap

Rap

Hit

Bonk

Thonk

Creak

Moan

Sigh

Cry

Scream

Pluck

Blow

Bow

Scrape

Strike

Stroke

What do you do when you improvise?:

Aggression

Reaction

Cognition

Suppression

Transmission

Relay

Produce

Expel

Excel

Propel

Rewind

Inhibit

Transist

Forgo

Deny

Refuse

Refute

Accentuate

Denounce

Demonstrate

Pronounce

Refuse

Explicate

Dictate

Show

Compel

Advance

Spill

Obviate

Deduce

APPENDIX 1

ONE NOTE

To start playing with a single tone promotes the initiation of a germinal idea which is imbued with *potential*. To repeat that tone promotes *reflection*. To play a different pitch instead of repeating the first pitch, begins an emotional journey only which the player's intention and projecting the pattern of the melody's pitches can reveal.

GRAB

Grab is a gestural technique which is like counterpoint. You imitate another player's gestures, by "grabbing" what that player is playing at a particular moment. Imitate or "grab" what

another player is playing, but do it only briefly.

BRIEF DISCUSSION ON MELODY

This gestural concept of melody takes the approach of what is perceived as melody--or the gestural idea of what is melody--compared with other musical techniques in general. For example, what makes melody stand out as melody when it is juxtaposed with other techniques? How does say an arpeggio transform from being an arpeggio into a melody? Primarily, in a gestural improve environment where many techniques may be employed all at once for the purpose of making music, a *slower* and more *direct* approach to pitch playing generally results in what can be perceived as a melody. The idea of connecting pitches, or near pitches, together to shape a direction--or a string of tones-- albeit inbetween which other filigree gestures can be placed, is a basic, general, recipe for melody making. The string of tones that are intended as melody should have an interesting shape and be imbued with an appropriate expressive quality concomitant with the sounds evocated by the tones. For example if the tones are more "Eastern" sounding then the evocative emotional expression might be one more meditative.

A *complex* melody, which is something different from a single straightforward melody, may actually consist of arpeggios as well as connected tones too, or may have more than one part or voice involved which contributes to the indigenous nature of complexity in the melody. However part of the problem gesturally or spontaneously while improvising even a simple melody is that if the classical model is emulated (such as antecedent/consequent phrase structure etc.) then the music resulting from that model can usually sound somewhat classical too, or even classical new music sounding. Thus the problem inherent in "melody" is that it is a somewhat outmoded concept in experimental music making. Therefore the initial point of this brief discussion was that what can be perceived as melody, or what can be carved out of the general sonic landscape and made representative of melody, is normally a basically slower and more direct approach to connecting the tones. Yet care should be taken to maintain an overall feel for experimentation and for being flexible and being quickly able to move into another technique, which may not be perceptible as melody, at a moment's notice when the improvisation requires it.

ATTACK

The Moon's surface is an excellent visual analogy for understanding something about the concept of attack. Imagine all the different types of imperfections such as cracks, craters, mountains, holes, dips, dings, etc. along the Moon's surface. Next imagine that each imperfection or impression was caused by some object striking the Moon's surface. Thus the act of striking is analogous to attack or articulation--where each attacking object has different forces, velocities, impacts, energy etc. Thus the Moon's surface is the result of a myriad type of attacks, while say a

golf ball, with it's carefully measured small round indentations maintains a relatively uniform style of attack. The Moon's surface is like a very strange piece of music with many different kinds of articulations represented by the various shapes along the surface which were formed by the different objects "attacking" the surface at various rates of speed and force.

More On Emotion

complex descriptions such as:

a dark, cold, stillness

travel: accelerating past a myriad of vistas

voyage into the unknown

a code riddle, and solving the code

advancing speed of communication

time warp

meditative amazement and wonder

SNEAK

Sneak is a sudden, pernicious, stealthy move on the player's part. The performer should play as if keeping the music a secret; then with sudden bolts, and bursts, and jabs. Sneak is all about the breaking of a barrier with the unexpected; and then having an introspective, curious, questioning motive to the playing—as if doing something dangerous, then ck'ing out to see if anyone noticed.

Sneak could also have an ulterior motive such as changing into anger or deconstruction—or perhaps sneak could move full sail into an attack. In any case “sneak” should be played with

genuine emotion as if slightly guilty-but quickly striking and retreating.

Sneak should be preceded by a gesture which will make it apparent such as serenity or calm & sustain for example.

References:

Fortunes from *Chop Chop* and *Su Hong's*.

(EXCLUSIVE BOOK PREVIEW)

2007

HESTERIAN SPIRITUALS:
Musicism within a Poly-dimensional Universe
by

Karlton E. Hester, Ph.D.

Areas of Scholarship:

1. Music Composition, Theory and Performance / 2. Music History / 3. Ethnomusicology
/ 4. Africana Studies / 5. Philosophy

Published by:
Hesteria Records & Publishing Company
148 Hagar Court
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

E-mail: orders@aainnovators.com
www.aainnovators.com

Table of Contents

Preface: *Music of the Spheres*

v

Chapter 1: *Genesis: Twin Pyramids*

1

Chapter 2: <i>Human Spirit - A Love Supreme</i>	30
Chapter 3: <i>Mirror - Impressions</i>	67
Chapter 4: <i>International Language: Expression</i>	95
Chapter 5: <i>History: Giant Steps</i>	120
Chapter 6: <i>Segregation – Africa and India</i>	128
Chapter 7: <i>Ambassadors: Spiritual</i>	156
Chapter 8: <i>Secular and Sacred: Ascension</i>	185
Chapter 9: <i>Blues: One Up, One Down</i>	209
Chapter 10: <i>Music Industry: Interstellar Space</i>	237
Appendix A: Supplementary Reading	268
Appendix B: Musical Examples	299

0 - Preface

Music of the Spheres

"... and the whole heaven to be a musical scale and a number... "

The Seven Great Egyptian Hermetic Principles in an Omni-Dimensional Universe

When one looks at the cosmos, the movement of the stars and planets, the laws of vibration and rhythm – all perfect and unchanging – it shows that the cosmic system is working by the law of music, the law of harmony. Whenever that harmony in the cosmic system is lacking in any way, then in proportion disasters come about in the world, and its influence is seen in many destructive forces which manifest in the world. If there is any principle upon which the whole of astrological law is based – and the science of magic and mysticism behind it – it is music.[1]

African-American “Jazz” culture evolved through a process of creativity, mentorship, fellowship and scholarship. This book explores those domains of “abstract truth.” If we view the universe as a unified whole, bound together by vibration of spirit energy, then we can begin to sense its order. Maharamayana expresses that potential this way: “The moon is one, but on agitated water it produces many reflections. Similarly ultimate reality is one, yet it appears to be many in a mind agitated by thoughts.”

What if there was a relationship between creativity and the Creator; between vibrations of music and those of particle spins in chemistry? What if a single note contained a mathematical formula that was the key to countless other universal phenomena? What if music reflected the world in which it evolves in more dimensions than a mirror could ever capture of an image? What if music from around the world was just variations of the same dialect? Suppose that music was capable of healing the body. I think that all of these possibilities above are true.

To understand the basic essence of vibrations, balance, polarity and omni-consciousness is to understand oneself and the connection of spirits to the Creator; so it is certainly no small feat. The ancient Egyptians summed up many of the concepts expressed earlier in the book with regards to basic universal principles whose relevance to our contemplation on spontaneous composition we want carefully consider. Many spiritualists and metaphysicians center these principles within our body, mind and spirit before seeking an understanding of universal “truths” in the external realm. In fact, focusing of the whole “you” as a nucleus to existence connects us to the universe at large. The Seven Great Egyptian Hermetic Principles are:

1. The Principle of Mentalism - "The all is mind: the universe is mental."

2. The Principle of Correspondence - "As above, so below; as below, so above."
3. The Principle of Vibration - "Nothing rests: everything moves: everything vibrates."
4. The Principle of Polarity - "Everything is dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites; like and unlike are the same; opposites are identical in nature, but different in degree; extremes meet; all truths are but half-truths; all paradoxes may be reconciled."
5. The Principle of Rhythm - "Everything flows, out and in; everything has its tides; all things rise and fall; the pendulum swing manifests in everything; the measure of the swing to the right is the measure of the swing to the left; rhythm compensates."
6. The Principle of Cause and Effect - "Every cause has its effect; every effect has its cause; everything happens according to the law; chance is but a name for law not recognized; there are many planes of causation, but nothing escapes the law."
7. The Principle of Gender - "Gender is in everything; everything has its masculine and feminine principles; gender manifests on all planes."

Vision

Artistic innovations come from those who dare to dream and create unique authentic perspective. Innovators move beyond the paradigms and limitations of the past. People should never lose sight of their dreams. Although dreams are modified continually over time, because life (and the universe) is flexible and we must roll with the cosmic tide, people must never stop dreaming.

What is **Hesterian Musicism**? The simplest definition is usually the best. Hesterian Musicism is the sum total of my individual and collective explorations of the universe through music. "Musicism" is a term that I coined several decades ago to express the ways in which I attempt to apply a holistic approach to music during my personal musical journey to a general understanding of the universe. That voyage aspires to elevate Musicism to the spiritual world. The Creator guides us to greater echelons of possibility. Therefore, inspiration is the realm within which the Creator acts through us as an instrument (or vehicle), just as a flute is an instrument that musicians set in motion with their musical ability and ideas. That world is one of vision where artists have just to imagine the possibilities, then follow the path towards the light at the end of the tunnel. Reverend Deborah L. Johnson[2] suggested the analogy of Dorothy's vision of the Land of Oz and her unwavering

journey along the Yellow Brick Road toward her dream of finding answers and solutions from the Wizard of Oz. She said that, “vision is a feeling rather than a reaction,” and that keeping dreams alive involves simply living the life for which we have been innately ordained.

A dictionary may tell us that sight is our perception of something using the visual sense; and that vision is an image or concept in the imagination. Musicism is not necessarily a situation where “seeing is believing” since there is often no music or script to read, compelling the performers and all artists involved to adopt a willingness to believe in what they are creating collectively in the absence of the facts or proof that upon which they may ordinarily rely. In such situations artists must stay focused and believe in themselves. Johnson pointed out the tremendous difference between sight and vision. She feels that, when we use only sight, the way that we see things can limit us to constant struggle because “pain pushes until vision pulls.” As a consequence, sight can just keep bringing us back to points of irritation. Thus we make precognitive commitments, where what we see is predetermined by what we expect. Most people who listen to music bring predetermined cultural baggage to each musical experience. Johnson would say that the visionary artist does not let probability limit possibility.

This book is perhaps an abstract verbal way of explaining what the term means to me in part – beyond the definition that my music proper provides more eloquently – in terms of gradually developing my “Love/Ontology” through an exploration of vibration. It is a compilation of those things learned along a path of vision. Thus, Musicism is a conscious way to reconcile music with all other vibratory forces in the universe. This is a study of musical vibration and its relationship to other systems of vibration throughout the universe. Therefore, a study of Musicism involves a glimpse at my personal way of putting music at the center of my soul to view the universe through a microscope and a telescope; and trying to discover relationships between all vibrating phenomena. In the pages that follow I will expose readers to the various ideas that I have contemplated over the years in an effort to better understand the “Music of the Spheres.” There are few meaningful conclusions that can be distilled other than the fact that all things vibrate in systematic ways.

It seemed clear to the Pythagoreans that the distances between the planets would have the same ratios as the overtone series produced from the harmonious sounds in a plucked string. They felt that the solar system consisted of ten spheres revolving in circles about a central fire, each sphere giving off its own sound frequency the way projectiles on Earth make a sound as they move through the atmosphere. Thus, the closer spheres to the source gave lower tones while the ones farther away moved faster and, consequently, gave higher frequencies of sounds. All of these sounds of motion combined into a beautiful harmony referred to as *the music of the spheres*.

Other notable European philosophers, mathematicians and astronomers have expressed related ideas. The Pythagorean idea was picked up by Plato, who in his *Republic* says of the cosmos; ". . . Upon each of its circles stood a siren who was carried round with its movements, uttering the concords of a single scale," and, in his *Timaeus*, he describes the circles of heaven subdivided according to the musical ratios. Around 20 centuries later, Kepler wrote in his *Harmonice Munde* (1619) that he wished "to erect the magnificent edifice of the harmonic system of the musical scale . . . as God, the Creator Himself, has expressed it in harmonizing the heavenly motions."

Kepler says later, "I grant you that no sounds are given forth, but I affirm . . . that the movements of the planets are modulated according to harmonic proportions."

People throughout the ages have recognized the connection between music, mathematics, and other universal phenomena. The Quadrivium is the Pythagoreans division of mathematics into four groups. It is there that we find a banner that reads, "Harmonia est discordia concors" or *Harmony is discordant concord*, propounding the thesis that harmony results from two unequal intervals drawn from dissimilar proportions. The diagram shows compasses, suggesting a link between geometry and music.

This arrangement provided the famous **Quadrivium of knowledge**, the four subjects needed for a bachelor's degree in the Middle Ages. Aristotle said that, "[the Pythagoreans] saw that the ... ratios of musical scales were expressible in numbers [and that] .. all things seemed to be modeled on numbers, and numbers seemed to be the first things in the whole of nature, they supposed the elements of number to be the elements of all things, and the whole heaven to be a musical scale and a number."

How is "spiritual" generally defined? The Wikipedia say, "A spiritual is an African American song, usually with a Christian religious text. Originally monophonic and a cappella, these songs are antecedents of the blues. The terms *Negro spiritual*, *Black spiritual*, and *African-American spiritual* are all synonyms; in the 19th century the term *jubilee* was more common (at least among African-Americans; whites often called them *slave songs*). Some musicologists call them *African-American folk songs*." [3]

In this book "spiritual" derives its flexible and fluid meaning from a provocative thought that I recently heard an African-American poet recite (he did not give his name) when I was playing a gig in Berkeley, California. His rhetorical question (theme) what, "What if there was only one God?" He then methodically listed the implications of this possibility and included: no Jesus, no Buddha, no Kristna, no Mohammad, no religion, no atheists, no Christians, no Jews, no churches, no synagogues, no greed, no war, no killing, no greed, no nations, no holidays (but every day's a holy day), . . . etc. This poem proposed the complete, focused and

ultimate unity through recognizing a single source (seed, God, Creator) and the peace and harmony that would potentially bring. Unity brings wholeness, which is holistic. Therefore, my use of the word “spiritual” suggests examining music in a holistic way that includes a “double fundamentals; the inner self as the microcosmic lens, and the universe as the macroscopic lens, through which we continually seek answers to the questions of the nature of vibration, harmony, creativity and love.

Music is one of the most multidimensional things in which intimately humans engage, so it should be investigated in a fashion that pays respect to its full scope. The purpose of this book is to present ideas about music composition that both musicians and the general reader can ponder. The content that follows is not simply a theoretical or practical study of musical elements written specifically for musicians. Instead it is a comparative analysis of ideas about creativity, vibration, spiritual influence, and an array of related concepts that surround music. Composers study, perform, compose and write their musical theories. Writing about music involves intellectual and emotional reflection. My books and music are not intended to challenge existing theories, histories or doctrines. They simply intend to reflect an individual personal expression of ideas that evolves from a continued study of the world of music and the universe in general. Information is presented here in a fashion that is related to the compositional processes, those that relate to the way we absorb process and retain information, involving rhapsodic repetition variations that re-enforce the most essential thematic ideas for the purposes of their retention.

My first book was on the music of John Coltrane, since his music had the deepest effect on my early musical direction and perspective. At the time I felt that the spontaneous compositions produced in Coltrane’s latest period was rarely investigated despite its importance to the evolution of “jazz” in the sixties and beyond. That process afforded me an opportunity to explore “jazz” in the microcosmic realm, through a close-up investigation of Coltrane’s music, while considering some of the social forces that inevitably influence and impact upon the life of a musician and his or her music. Nonetheless, due to the tremendous depth of Coltrane’s musical development, I found it impossible to do much better than scratch the surface. When I discovered his “matrix” I was impressed by its implications, but I did not feel ready to make any particular assumptions about its meaning. Arranged much as an astrological chart is, Coltrane’s matrix (mandala) reflected his exploration of potential relationships between various forces of the mundane (material) and arcane (spiritual) worlds. It appeared that he now understood ways to merge his understanding of the blues matrix with the mathematical symmetry and cyclical patterns of his own personal musical ideas.

The music of Coltrane’s various compositions from his final decade (*Giant Steps*, *A Love Supreme*, *Impressions*, *Spiritual*, *Africa*, *India*, *Ascension*, *Expression*, *Interstellar Space*, etc.) became guiding lights for the musical perspectives of many artists. *Giant Steps* marked both a culminating point in his study of conventional tonal theory and the beginning of a new sense of musical freedom. As his vision became increasingly clearer, and as he collaborated with other artists who

were aligned with his musical direction and vision, his approach to composition gradually became increasingly more spontaneous. Just as Coltrane gradually moved toward producing music with only the matrix he and his associates committed to memory as a mutual score; thus, there seems to have been little or no notated score for his *Interstellar Space*, for example.

Changing times inevitably require the construction of new paradigms. Twentieth-century technological advances introduced new means of amplification, sound production and recording capabilities. Electronic sequencing and notation software eventually created new ways to compose. Musical symbols, notation and scores in general introduce new processes and take on new meanings. The limitations and purpose of the musical score in the nineteenth century moved beyond the confines and parameters of twenty-first-century scores. Written instructions for tempi, dynamics and other musical expression were elevated to levels of greater technical precision with the introduction of digital recording.

Both life and music involve making choices. People learn in different ways. The purpose of this study is to consider ways composers express ideas as they observe the world around them. To create spontaneous art effectively requires ‘presence.’ Musicians must approach the moment with preparation and direct full attention to the task at hand. Accomplishing this is natural, but most of us have been socialized to filter everything more through our logical processes rather than trusting the efficacy of our intuitive capacity.

This is not a music theory book. Instead it is a collection of ideas regarding music’s connection to all other vibrating things. Hopefully, therefore, readers from a wide spectrum of interests and backgrounds will find elements of this book useful. Students may find helpful prescriptions for learning to compose, improvise and arrange, and use the following scales and patterns to advance their technical facility. “Jazz” evolves through a myriad of forces on a variety of musical, social and spiritual levels. Spirituality is a difficult element to qualify and quantify. Nonetheless, it worthy of some level of consideration in this study, since a number of “jazz” innovators considered spirituality a dominant force in their lives and music, as the titles of compositions by Mary Lou Williams, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, and others suggest. The content of the chapters that follow is not intended to prescribe musical formulae for composers and improvisers. Instead, the point is to help generate a broad range of ideas and encourage creative exploration based on fundamental musical knowledge. Thus, the much of the following materials presented represent my subjective musical collection of contemplations and explorations along a path of perpetual self-discovery.

Music and life evolves from the universal laws of Nature. The evolution of music began with the multifaceted characteristics of a single tone. The extended patterns and qualities that radiate from such a tone are reflective of fundamental patterns that extend throughout the universe. The overtone series became the initial musical foundation, from which melodic and harmonic development emerged, just as our bipolar human orientation and perception of the universe set much of our approaches to organizing rhythm in motion. Although musical tendencies evolving from the overtone series became dogmatic musical policies in

some cultures, Nature remains the most reliable source of information for explorers of musical evolution. Reconciling the rules of sound in Nature with those social musical procedures, evolved through various theoretical conclusions adopted worldwide, is a daunting task. Composition (spontaneous or premeditated) often attempts to evolve organic “sound-environments” that reflect human thoughts, emotions, experiences, and other universal ideas and processes stored within our consciousness and subconscious minds.

Waves are formed when a state of equilibrium encounters a disturbance. Most of us have seen the effect sound has on sand when placed on a thin metal plate, then exposed to the vibrations of sound. The magical symmetrical patterns that form suggest that the abstract sound of music has a measurable and systematic effect on the physical environment. Nothing is irrelevant in the general scheme of events and phenomena that occur within the universe. Action yields its consequences, therefore, in a world of continual tension and release, ebb and flow, yin and yang, and other forms of polarity that perpetually propels existence forward in an expanding universe. The theories proposed in this study are based largely upon harmony that is implied in the overtone series. Music throughout the world evolved out of an evolving aural understanding of the harmonic series. Of course every action or theory usually has an equal and opposing action or theory.

Creativity produces ritual, emotional and intuitive manifestations, on one end of the spectrum, and strictly rational works on the other. Of course, these poles are not mutually exclusive, but music of various world cultures reflects different kinds of settings. Indian audiences might be insulted by starts and stops, interrupting music with by verbose explanation that might occur during a lecture demonstration involving Indian music, whereas some European cultures are completely comfortable with that particular mixture. Approaching music as a system of communication that evolves out of the overtone series tends to produce an open-ended inquiry that involves a natural application of intuition and measurement. Conventional music theory in the Western world produce even divisions of the octave based on a systematic approaches to music. Individuals and societies can view the world through lenses that perhaps primarily reflect either a general right-brain or left-brain orientation. Spontaneous composition is strongest when it combines both brain realms of thought processing so that intuition and technique reinforce each other throughout periods of creative production. The problems that emerge as composers struggle with the forces of polarity, dynamics, and other musical elements and dimensions are ultimately resolved once the performance is completed since the outcome then stands historically as a complete and independent phenomenon. Just as each person is a complete individual that others can appreciate, dislike or totally disregard, the same is true of musical composition. Nonetheless, each composition is validated by the fact each that simply exists. To varying degrees, someone inevitably appreciates, dislikes or totally disregards all musical composition.

Of course, there are intangible qualities of music (and of human perception in general) that defy analysis? Music can be poetic as it reflects an inner spirit whose ethereal makeup escapes mathematical or chemical scrutiny. The imprint created by the range of qualities within each musical tone that Bessie Smith, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Billie Holiday, or

Thelonious Monk produces are poly-dimensional. Under careful microscopic analysis, it is clear that all increments of the elements of timbre, melody, rhythm, texture, harmony, dynamics, form and style that each artist emits are pregnant with its own distinguished attributes. Machines have no inner soul or emotions to reflect regardless of their levels of technical proficiency. Computers can learn but they cannot feel. Therefore, the spontaneous expression of Coltrane's saxophone will always be distinguishable from the spontaneous saxophone sounds a machine might produce. Tone modulates to produce a range of tension and release that ranges from the relative smoothness of sine wave flute timbre to the more anxious, overtone enriched tone of an oboe or bassoon. Melodies can be active and involve saturated density of motion, or they can remain meditative and focused upon the isolation of moments, emotions and ideas.

This book contains information obtained gradually through meditations, contemplation, practice and a variety of sources. Most of all, I have been inspired by the thoughts and deeds of a number of master musicians, thinkers and mentors whose ideas permeate each of the chapters that follow. The material is not organized in any sort of standard "theory of composition", but it hopefully flows with the same degree of Afrocentric logic, streams of consciousness and organic structure, as did the abstract logic of the prime ensembles Miles Davis or John Coltrane. African-African music informs the listener of some elements of thousands of years that form the socio-cultural history of Global African music. African-American artists emphasize content over form so that each poetic cell of information becomes a cogent message charged with instructive information and wisdom. Composers don't write long sets of notes for each of their compositions. Instead their short titles provide infinite insight into their lives and music. Charlie Parker's at once humorous, tragic and ironic title "Relaxin' at Camarillo" tells us the 'who,' 'what' 'where,' 'why' and 'how' of a situation in his life in three words, if we know how to interpret his descriptive message. Each tone and nuance of the musical information great musicians produce is equally rich.

Innovative spontaneous composers bring their individuality to their musical output. Their individual and collective musical personalities shed light on the process of musical evolution. Thelonious Monk's tendency to play simultaneous half steps not only implies the quarter-step between them but also emphasizes the importance of the dominant sharp-9th chord (C-E-G-Bb-D#) that opens a window of understanding into the blues sonority and matrix. For those who imitate rather than learning to move through a process that leads towards self-discovery, trumpeter Donald Byrd says that great people explain to those interested in reproducing music that they should "Do as I do, not what I do." A few years ago, at a concert billed as a tribute to John Coltrane in Boston, imitators spent an entire evening attempting to play 'like Coltrane.' When master musician Yusef Lateef came on stage, however, he gave tribute to "Trane by performing one of his own unique composition in a fresh, expressive and personal voice that emerged from the meditative stillness of humility and ancestral wisdom.

Summary

Music is the mirror of our souls. The development of music skill that will touch humankind requires tenacity,

dedication, wisdom, humility, compassion and love. I have collected a few gems from e-mail messages that I have received over the years that sum up general qualities that elevate individuals to their highest good that, of course, apply to music as well. Here are a few selected thoughts from that list:

1. The nobler sort of human emphasizes the good qualities in others, and does not accentuate the bad. The inferior does the reverse.
2. When you are laboring for others let it be with the same zeal as if it were for yourself.
3. Our greatest glory is lies beyond never falling, but in rising every time we fall.
4. The expectations of life depend upon diligence; the mechanic that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools.
5. To see the right and not to do it is cowardice.
6. Those who speak without modesty will find it difficult to make their words good.
7. The superior human thinks always of virtue; the common man thinks of comfort.

"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it." Margaret Fuller

[1] Khan, of Hazrat Inayat. *The Mysticism of Sound and Music: The Sufi Teaching of Hazrat Inayat Khan*. Shambhala: Boston, 1996. p. 13.

[2] Pastor of Inner Light Ministries in Santa Cruz, California

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_%28music%29

© Hesteria Records & Publishing Co. 2006
Santa Cruz, California
Copyright 2007 by **Hesteria Records & Publishing Co.**
148 Hagar Court
Santa Cruz, California 95064

www.aainnovators.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

PUBLISHED IN THE IMPROVISOR BY PERMISSION

Prelude to an Internet article in the key of green

~Iner Souster

2007

The process of building experimental instruments out of junk and common household appliances can at times be an exercise in futility. There are those moments when the junk, (along with the collection of various hardware store parts that you have accumulated during the attempted construction of this so called instrument) just don't really seem to want to work together. It is at this point that I take special care in selecting the largest and most persuasive of hammers. After a few cathartic whacks of said hammer on a completely unrelated piece of junk, I am ready to continue.

Often I find myself sitting in my workshop, which is also my spaceship for hours on end, sifting through all the wonderful pieces of "what the heck is that" that have accumulated over the years. Things found on the street, things that the local inhabitants of my neighborhood donate to the cause by leaving their garbage on my doorstep, or at my local watering hole. Broken chairs and video machines are all the craze this summer. Picking up one piece of junk and trying to match it to another can often take hours, but there are also the times when things just fall nicely into place. I once woke from my peaceful slumber with the idea for a frame in my foggy head. With out giving it a second thought I pulled the futon from the spare room and started cutting it into it's predestined lengths. Went back to bed when I was done and woke up a few hours later only to find my futon was gone and my dream was leaning against the wall in my living room.

There are also those moments that seem to be created and controlled by the gods themselves. In this case it was my girlfriend. Often when working on project there is a thing called spillover that happens. It is when all of the debris in my spaceship spills over into our living room, and from there to our kitchen. The hallways are always the first casualties of the spillover effect. Anyways this was one of those situations. I was on a three day instrument building bender with very

little sleep. This one piece had been dogging me the whole time, and I was quite close to bringing in the hammer. Common sense kicked in and told me to take a nap on the too small to be comfortable couch. This usually helps in the creative processing of junk. So off to sleep I go. When I awoke my lady friend had cleaned up my fantastic mess of a living room and in doing so had placed the not so co-operative piece and all its struggling components in the corner out of the way and in doing so she had solved the problem. All I had to do was bolt it together and add strings. It's just that easy at times.

Whether building instruments by design, by accident, or by rage something interesting always comes out in the end. Sometimes interesting can be mind boggling and not very functional. I call those instruments wall pieces.

When performing I like to encourage people in the audience to take the instruments off the wall and join in. Or leave them on the wall and play from there. At one show there was this fellow who ran around the bar banging and plucking as many instruments as he could get his hands on. In doing so it helped to encourage others in the audience to do the same. At one point there were around fifteen people with instruments in their hands and this crazy guy running back and forth adding to our sound and overall visuals of the night. It was perhaps one of the best shows I have ever played.

Iner Souster

The Honest Person's Guide to the Orchestra

Anonymous

2010

The members of the orchestra are divided into four sections. These are: the strings, the woodwinds, the brass, and the percussion.

There is also someone standing in front of all these other folks playing no instrument at all. This person with the ego that is bigger than some of the musicians is called the conductor. It is generally believed that the conductor is required to make musical decisions and to hold all of the instruments together in a cohesive interpretation of any given work. Not so. But never tell a conductor this, because they are easily offended. The conductor is necessary because the four groups would rather eat Velveeta than have anything to do with someone from another section. And as we know, musicians are quite serious about their food.

Why all the animosity? Before I begin my explanation, let me set the record straight in plain English about some of the characteristics which typify the four groups.

String players are neurotic prima donnas who won't even shake your hand for fear of permanent injury. They are known to question the musical ability of the conductor. A string player will never look you directly in the eye and they never bathe carefully ... or often.

Woodwind players have IQs in the low- to mid- genius range. Nerds with coke-bottle glasses and big egos, blowers who tend to be extremely quiet, cowering behind bizarre-looking contraptions -- their instruments -- so nobody will notice them. It is often difficult to discern whether a woodwind player is male or female.

Brass players are loud-mouthed drunkards who bully everyone - with the possible and occasional exception of a stray percussionist. They like to slick their hair back. Nobody knows why.

Percussionists are insensitive oafs who constantly make tasteless jokes at the expense of the strings and woodwinds. They look very good in concert attire but have the worst table manners of all musicians. They are always male, or close enough.

Now, is it any wonder that orchestra members have little to do with anyone outside of their own section? For the answer to this and other pertinent questions let us examine the individual instrument and the respective -- if not respected -- players within each section.

THE STRINGS

Let's continue now with the real truth about ... the strings. We begin with the string family's smallest member: the **violin**. The violin is a high-pitched, high-tension instrument. It's not an easy instrument to play. Lots of hard music is written for this instrument.

Important things for a violinist to keep in mind are: Number one -- the door to your studio should be left slightly open so that everyone can hear your brilliant practice sessions. Number two: you should make disparaging remarks about the other violinists whenever possible, which is most of the time. And number three: you should tell everyone how terribly valuable your instrument is until they drool. Violinists have such big egos that the violin section of an orchestra in Germany wanted their union contract re-written so that their section would be paid "per note played" instead of "per concert" as everyone else is paid.

The **viola** is a large and awkward instrument, which when played, sounds downright disgusting. Violists are the most insecure members of the string section. Nothing can be done about this. Violists don't like to be made fun of and therefore find ways of making people feel sorry for them. They wear shabby clothes so that they'll look as if they've just been dragged under a train. It works quite well.

People who play the **cello** are simply not good looking. They have generally chosen their instrument because, while in use, the cello hides 80% of its player's considerable bulk. Most cellists are in analysis which won't end until they can play a scale in tune or, in other words, never. Cellists wear sensible shoes and always bring their own lunch.

Double bass players are almost completely harmless. Most have worked their way up through the ranks of a large moving company and are happy to have a secure job in a symphony orchestra or anywhere. The fact that it takes at least ten basses to make an audible sound tends to make these simple-minded folks disappear into their woodwork, but why do they drive such small cars?

Harpists are gorgeous. And they always know it. They often look good into their late eighties. Although rare as hen's teeth, male harpists are equally beautiful. Harpists spend their time perfecting their eye-batting, little-lost-lamb look so they can snare unsuspecting wind players into carrying their heavy gilded furniture around. Debussy was right; harpists spend half their life tuning and the other half playing out of tune.

Pianists in the symphony orchestra work the least and complain the most. They have unusually large egos and, because they can only play seated, also have the biggest butts. When they make mistakes, which is more often than not, their excuse is that they have never played on that particular piano before. Oh, the poor darlings.

THE WOODWINDS:

The **Flute**: Oversexed and undernourished is the ticket here. The flute player has no easier time of getting along with the rest of the orchestra than anyone else, but that won't stop them from sleeping with everyone. Man or woman, makes no difference. The only thing that flautists need to use for birth control is their personalities.

The **bass flute** is not even worth mentioning.

Piccolos, on the other hand, belong mainly on the fifty yard line of a football field where the unfortunate audience can maintain a safe distance.

Oboe players are seriously nuts. They usually develop brain tumors from the extreme air pressure built up over the years of playing this rather silly instrument. Oboists suffer from a serious Santa Claus complex, spending all their waking hours carving little wooden toys for imaginary children, although they will tell you they are putting the finishing touches on the world's greatest reed. Oboists can't drive and always wear clothes one size too small. They all wear berets and have special eating requirements which are endlessly annoying and are intended to make them seem somewhat special.

The **clarinet** is, without a doubt, the easiest of all orchestral instruments to play. Clarinets are cheap, and the reeds are literally a dime a dozen. Clarinetists have lots of time and money for the finest wines, oriental rugs, and exotic sports cars. They mostly have no education, interest, or talent in music, but fortunately for them they don't need much. Clarinets come in various sizes and keys-- nobody knows why. Don't ask a clarinetist for a loan, as they are stingy and mean. Some of the more talented clarinetists can learn to play the saxophone. Big deal.

English horn players are losers although they dress better than oboists. They cry at the drop of a beret.

Bassoon players are downright sinister. They are your worst enemy, but they come on so sweet that it's really hard to catch them at their game. Here's an instrument that's better seen than heard. Bassoon players like to give the impression that theirs is a very hard instrument to play, but the truth is that the bassoon only plays one or two notes per piece and is therefore only heard for a minute in any given evening. However, in order to keep their jobs -- their only real concern -- they act up a storm doing their very best to look busy.

It takes more brawn, and slightly less brain, to play **contrabassoon**. They are available at pawnshops in large numbers -- the instruments as well as the players -- and play the same three or four numbers as the tuba, although not quite as loud or beautiful.

THE BRASS:

Trumpet players are the scum of the earth. I'll admit, though, they do look good when they're all cleaned up. They'll promise you the world, but they lie like a cheap rug. Sure, they can play soft and pretty during rehearsal, but watch out come concert time! They're worse than lawyers, feeding off the poor, defenseless, weaker members of the orchestra and loving every minute of it. Perhaps the conductor could intercede? Oh, I don't think so.

Trombone players are generally the nicest brass players. However, they do tend to drink quite heavily and perhaps don't shine the brightest headlights on the highway, but they wouldn't hurt you and are the folks to call with all your pharmaceutical questions. They don't count well, but stay pretty much out of the way anyway. Probably because they know just how stupid they look when they play. It's a little-known fact that trombone players are unusually good lovers. This is true.

The **French horn**. I only have two words of advice: stay away. Horn players are piranhas. They'll steal your wallet, lunch, boyfriend, or wife or all the above given half a chance or no chance at all. They have nothing to live for and aren't afraid of ruining your life. The pressure is high for them. If they miss a note, they get fired. If they don't miss a note, they rub your nose in it and it doesn't smell so sweet.

The kind-hearted folks who play the **tuba** are good-looking and smart. They'd give you the shirt off their back. The tuba is one of the most interesting things to take in the bath with you. It's a crying shame that there's usually only one per orchestra. If only it could be different. They are simply the most fun musicians to hang out with. There was once an old joke that two tuba players walked past a bar. Although this theoretically could happen, such an occurrence has never been documented.

THE PERCUSSION:

And finally -- the **percussion**. These standoffish fools who get paid perfectly good money for blowing whistles and hitting things that don't deserve the considerable space they are allotted on the stage. Aside from the strange coincidence that all percussionists hail from the Deep South, another little known, but rather revealing fact, is there are no written percussion parts in the standard orchestral repertoire. Percussionists do have music stands and they do use them -- to look at girlie magazines. Percussionists play whatever and whenever they damn well want to, and it's always too loud! Whole percussion sections can be seen and now and then on various forms of public transportation, where they practice getting up and down as a group. This represents the only significant challenge to a percussionist.

The ones who have a spark of decency and intelligence play the

timpani. Most percussionists are deaf, but those who play timpani pretend to tune their instruments for the sake of the ignorant and easily duped conductor.

The guy with the short nose who plays the **cymbals** is no Einstein, but he's also one of the best guys to share a room with on tour. Cymbal players don't practice -- I guess they figure it's bad enough to have to listen to those things at the concert.

And that just about does it. I trust that this little tour has enlightened you just a little bit to the mysterious inner world of the symphony orchestra. This world, one which is marked by the terrible strain of simple day-to-day survival, is indeed not an easy one. Perhaps now you will be a bit more understanding of the difficulties which face a modern-day concert artist. And so the next time you find yourself at the symphony, take a moment to look deeply into the faces of the performers on the stage and imagine how much more difficult their lives are than yours. This is surely what's on their minds ... if anything.

Points of Jazz

Excerpt & Highlight of the 16th Annual Meeting

International Association of Schools of Jazz

Louisville, Ky.

June 29, 2006

By LaDonna Smith

This past June in Louisville, Kentucky I was lucky enough to observe one day of the 16th Annual Meeting of *International Association of Schools of Jazz*. In this very special international gathering, students and teachers from Russia, Japan, Sweden, and the U.S.A. represent just a few examples of the 19 countries gathered for musical interaction, classes and performances. As explained by Artistic Director, Dave Liebman, jazzman with a passion for education, the *IAJE* is a different kind of organization, often committed to actually supplying the funding for selected students from countries around the world, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to leave their country, making the opportunity for these students and individuals who are working in the medium of jazz, to collaborate with others, making personal the connections through of the universality of the "language of the jazz."

Liebman explained in his convocation the beginnings of the organization, the meeting in "the Hague" and how the conference began in 1987 in Rottenburg, Germany and has been hosted since in more many countries including France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Ireland, Poland, and the USA, where two other conferences were previously held in New York's New School and Boston's Berklee School of Music. I the *IASJ's* mission statement says, "Through its core values of freedom of expression, group interaction, shared respect and individual responsibility, jazz embodies the highest ideals of art and human creativity. It has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting harmonious relations across highly diverse cultural boundaries. The *IAJE* devotes much of its attention to developing jazz programs in schools, and ensuring that jazz is part of music curriculums that are already in place. Student to student contact is the centerpiece of the meetings. As Liebman puts it, "Coming from a country which may have a small jazz scene compared to the United States, it is important that a young, aspiring musician realize that he is not alone, and that people of his or her generation are involved with the exact same material, and shared repertoire that has come to be known as standard and creative jazz." He said, "It doesn't matter what language you learn jazz in, since the Duke is Duke Ellington, no matter where." This year the conference was hosted by Mike Tracy, Director of University of Louisville's jazz studies program. Students are divided into working ensembles after auditions for an intense week of study, improvisation, collaboration, and performance.

After Liebman's opening remarks, he then performed a breathtaking & subtle virtuoso piece on soprano saxophone, with Louisville educator and pianist, Harry Pickens. The language was clear and the musical opening of the session, flowering in the moment, left the room hushed with appreciation.

Harry Pickens, then jumped up off the piano bench, and began talking of "being in a living room, listening to CD's, talking to 4:00 a.m. moving spontaneously through his stirring and totally inspiring lecture to the audience. "I believe in your affirming the fact that jazz is now a global music, bringing the entire world of jazz together, that, the music of jazz is in fact the world's first true international music". We can connect (as jazz musicians) in a rigorous discipline of melodies, harmonies, and form that are shared, and we are trained in the "melting pot of the moment, in that moment of being fully present to the mystery of life itself".

Ask Harry for his Book on Jazz. Send him an email HPickens@Bellsouth.com

He suggests these points of discipleship to everyone in the room.

- Have a Spiritual and a physical discipline, because what we are dealing with here is the molding of energy.
- He mentions books by Tony Robbins. "Accept and let go."
- Fill your mental file cabinets with records of positive experiences.
- Write them down.
- Consciously remember.
- Practice remembering. The more you practice, the more you can recall. Keep a journal.

Continuing on the lecture theme, "Did you create your pulse?"

It's there, your heartbeat and breath! How many of you are conscious of the breaths that you take? We are all breathing the same air. It's not the mind or conscious self that knows we live on the edge of a mystery, connected to life itself, with the willingness and capacity to risk it all in the moment.

"You are part of the second century of the art form of jazz. Much of the foundation was planted in the 20th century--Armstrong, Blake, Brubeck, Kenton, Miles Davis, Weather Report, bee bop, Bud Powell. Now we're blending in new directions ~ *world music, folk, reggae, and Balanese!*

My message to you is to root yourself deeply in the tradition. Listen retroactively to fats Waller, Duke

Ellington, Milton, Teddy Wilson. Experience the intensity and power, taste the power of the individual voices. Charlie Parker revolutionized the music by his unique approach to melody and line. Go back to notice so you can recognize and appreciate the generations. The corollary value is to go forward and allow yourself to open yourself to every possible influence, so that you can do for jazz in the 21st century what the greats did in the 20th century.

Pickens goes on to say to the young students of jazz. "Get rid of the inner critic. Change your images and change the quality of your own performance."

- Dis-inhibit yourself. Sing before you play. Move. Scat.
- Posture. Sit as though you're bored and tired, then sit as though you were more alert than ever in your life. Feel alertness and show it in your eyes. Now scat sing and what do you notice?
- Fake it til you make it". Put whatever "feeling" in your body that you need. Act as though you want to feel, and your feelings will follow...
- Mentions the book, "Guided Imagery for the Jazz Master" by Jamie Abersold. Say, "I trust the music within me, and easily allow it to flow through me," moving from stage fright to deep confidence in performing. The more you imagine, the creative imagination becomes more powerful.

Pickens tells the students, "You are part of a great tradition. Liberate the Voice inside. Use mental rehearsal. See yourself fully. Look well to this day, this note, this moment, this experience. Yesterday is a dream. Tomorrow is a vision".

"Rule number One. The Music first. No ego or nothing else, then there is really no "me". Nobody really cares and it's nobody's business. There's no good or bad.

It is."

After a thoughtful silence, Liebman proceeds to play one of the most sensitive soprano solos I've ever heard, with Pickens entering moments later, supporting the essence of every chord.

Later on, Dave Liebman came back to talk to the group, with specific technique applications in his own

lecture, "Working with a Rhythm Section". He begins talking about the basics—elements like melody, rhythm, harmony, color, and form. Then of course he adds, there's shape. He tells styles of movement, of Coltrane, and speaks of "plateau playing", going up and leveling off, go up, level off. And of Miles, who would go up and leave it there. Then the next player takes the melody from there, at that *left* intensity, and that's *where he starts*.

And there's the 'Stop before you finish. Leave it, to go on! He monishes us to listen. and ask the question, what is the shape of the solos?

The Color? blue? Mixing colors and sounds...it's part of the sound seduction

Jazz? Sorry, it's a *rhythmic* music. What separates jazz from all the other improvised music is the rhythm! (plus the harmony) It can be lyrical, sweet, humorous, generous, lovely, rough, or harsh. Harmony is the same: emotion, shape, and physical. Rhythm is the first element. Harmony is secondary, and Melody is Universal. But it's the rhythm that is the heart of the idiom. The triplet, and the eighth note.

Liebman explains to us that the eighth note is the currency, the penny. Rashid Ali took Elvin Jones place in the Coltrane band and went out of rhythm. He went free. That was his thing. And for Liebman, it is also a quest, to get out of eight notes. How to get out of eighth notes? He poses the question.

First, he says, practice eighth notes accurately. It is fundamental to the beat.

He has us do an exercise. We count bars in our heads and clap after four bars on the beat. Sounds easy, doesn't it, but our claps came together all ragged, not exact. His point exactly. Time is relative. But you gotta be on the beat. Gotta keep it in your body as well as your head. If you have it, then you can play on it, before, after it, around it, but you're still keeping it going. Suggests practice with a metronome, and "Early Jazz" Gunther Schuller's book for understanding the upbeat of jazz. Before, after, center of the beat. Exercise, top, middle, behind the beat, because if we know where the beat is, we don't have to paint it out.

Another exercise: "Boo!" Say "boo!" back.

"Hoo!" Say "hoo" back. "fuck you!"

Pick it up from the other guy or compliment, or acknowledge the presence of an idea , or even reject it *without* mimicking the idea, but spring from it.

Liebman called on a rhythm section, behind him, to demonstrate different ways of playing the beat.

"Top, middle, or behind the beat, as a rhythm section, because we know where the beat is, we don't have to *point it out*" literally".

This gives the music an *aheadness* or *laid backness* about tension and release. "Move through the groove", he says. "Everybody gets it. Part of playing together is that the beat is flexible or loose. He

advocates to play behind the beat for four days, then play ahead of the beat for four days, then mix it up. He cites Dexter Gordon, famous for playing being the beat. Johnny Griffin plays on top of the beat. *Who you are* has an area of the beat that's most natural to *you*. Elvin Jones plays as custodian of behind the beat. Mid tempo, he'd go down. When he plays fast he plays on top of the time.

Other examples. Miles would feel the drag. Count Basie, eighteen guys lay behind the beat. Eighth notes: Place front, center, and behind. Quarter note triplets: *against* the beat. Nine vs. Seven: Southern India on violin.

Liebman follows this intense & captivating discussion about 'time with a blues jam. The rhythm section cranks up. I notice it sits well in a white University Recital Hall. In fact, I enjoy it immensely more than in a dark room with whiskey, cigarettes and beer. For me, it's an entirely suitable environment for the music. Attentive listenership. Guys exposing the music's authenticity.

As Liebman remarks, "What's a couple of beats among friends? But yet, who can count? Nobody. Create shapes in time! As Picasso has pointed out, Art is deception. The appearance of something you don't see what you think you see. The listener, the receiver, take on a voyage. Entertainment is about expectations. Jazz, creates a voyage, a trip. In the trip, you see, you feel, you breathe from one land to the next, it takes you to a better place, about feeling, and thinking". Imagination.

~LaDonna Smith

For more information on International Association of Schools of Jazz,

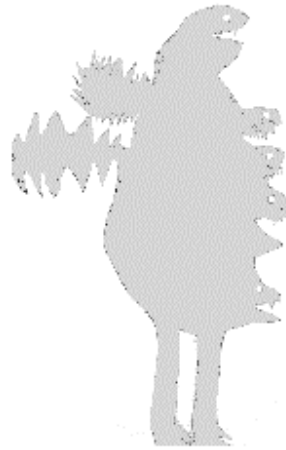
<http://www.iasj.com/>

Gamelan Amadindas

An Interview with [Gregory Acker](#)

2006

By [LaDonna Smith](#)



Gregory Acker has worked as an artist-in-residence in schools, community centers, and churches for almost a decade now, helping groups explore various world musics, instrument-building, and music and storytelling performance. His current efforts utilize a homemade set of tuned percussion instruments called Gamelan Amadindas (modeled after the gamelan music of Indonesia and the multiple-player xylophone tradition of Uganda), and a homemade Ewe (West African) family of drums.

Gregory Acker is a Master Artist with Very Special Arts Indiana, and a long-term Kentucky Arts Council artist-in-residence. He has received the KAC's Al Smith Fellowship, as well as grants from the NEA, Southern Arts Federation, Greater Louisville Fund for the Arts, and the City of Louisville. A former Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco and Togo, he has also studied flute and percussion in South India. Mr. Acker recently received his MA in Ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

What were your first instruments, and favorite instrumental leanings. What inspired you to start building musical instruments?

I know my first instruments were the pots and pans, but that's an old story...my musical experiences while living in Africa were transformative. A disgruntled classical and jazz player (I found the forms constricting, arbitrary, and the social aspects of making music were competitive and hierarchical), I was ready for new forms of musico-social interaction. I had really never seen (or appreciated seeing) music made live which did not require written music. The sheer joy of the participants involved in the interlocking relationship between the percussion, voices, and movement was obvious, and my revelation was that, at least within the circles I previously moved, this "joy of music" familiar to many

improvisers was largely absent. I began to have far more interest in both improvisation, especially as it related to flute playing, and in general to the word "play" at all.

Curiously, I also began to have a parallel interest in the interlocking percussion traditions of African and Indonesian music. They can be very rigid, but they both provide an amazing palette for observing how one player's minute variation can affect a whole group rhythm, or how one person can affect an entire community.

When I returned from the Peace Corps, I sought out improvisors and those interested in world music. A major influence, and my first recording collaborator, was Mark Englert, who is an incredibly inventive improviser and instrument-builder. Mark's building aesthetic, enforced by a low-income lifestyle, incorporates many found objects. I learned a great deal from him.

I began by building drums, which was the one type of instrument Mark did not build. I expanded to string instruments, built using driftwood from the Ohio River, amplified using contact mics, and later experimented with simple wind instruments like didgeridoos and struck aerophones. While at graduate school, I researched and developed a Karnatak flute-making process, and I continue to provide the instruments for Tanjore Viswanathan (the South Indian flute/vocal teacher at Wesleyan).

The majority of my instruments have evolved to further my interests in community music participation. I build many instruments, which can be played by more than one player at a time, and have also developed instrument-building workshops to help people make their own.

Most recently, I have been working with homemade gamelan-style instruments, and have built several sets for schools, community groups, and a church. I've also recently completed a PVC Ewe drum set, and just finished using these for the first time in an artist residency this month. My approach in building these instruments--and in developing the teaching processes I use when working as an artist-in-residence--has been to offer groups an affordable, accessible entry into these musical cultures.

I must confess to another reason for making my own instruments. When I returned from Africa, I stumbled into the huge debate over "authenticity." I now defer to John Cage on this subject, who commented:

once anything happens, it authentically is

Authenticity is a sharp razor, but in my opinion it is not always appropriate in the arts, where we could use a few more good hoes and lots more fertilizer.

But by making my own instruments, no one could tell me how they were supposed to be played; I could develop my own traditions with them. This only became an issue when I was fully aware of the impossibility of "mastering" any of the musical traditions of other cultures which drew me. Lately, it has seemed to me like a well-rounded musician, familiar and comfortable with many different musical styles and forms--but master of none--might be one definition of mastery in our multicultural society.

What have been your traditional influences?

The clarity of the ethnomusicological approach (on issues like instrument organology and documentation of performance practice, anyway) has helped me to describe the background of techniques which influence my instrumental and musical creations more accurately. Perhaps it has been most helpful in helping me to say what it is I am not doing. Naturally though, intense study with teachers from Ghana, Java, and South India has given me more to say in teaching about these musics, and about teaching in general. In terms of providing instruments which are reasonable facsimiles of the instruments from these cultures, so that people in my circles can begin to experience different ways of musical connection, I always laugh when people ask me about "the real instruments." The ones I didn't make.

As long as I've known you, you've been a teacher. What were the evolutionary steps in your teaching aspirations? What motivates you to teach?

When I was a college student, I figured out four things that I wanted to do in my life: music, theater, writing, and teaching. I assumed for some time that these would be discreet activities. But it has turned out much better--I do them all at once. My professional work consistently involves storytelling (writing/theater/movement), music, and then teaching others to do these things in a group setting. I think the reason I teach the way I do--aspiring to maximum group participation--is a direct result of experiencing social participation in the arts/rituals in Africa.

Lately, I have begun to view non-institutionalized opportunities more seriously. Today, three kids from the neighborhood stopped by to see if I had any popsicles (it is February, but unseasonably warm). I told them I was working on some drums, and they wanted to meet "the family." We jammed for quite a while, and I shared some rhythms with them, and then let them lead me in "George, George, George of the jungle..." Of course, it is hard to be available for things like this consistently, when the evil god Lakkamani is lurking around every corner.

Describe the project with the kids in the juvenile detention center.

My gamelan set is designed to be maximally inclusive--to enable people who claim not to be musicians or composers to compose and perform group music quickly, in the hopes that early satisfaction will lead to more musical activity. The instruments are easy to play, and composition is facilitated by numbering the keys of the instruments. We use compositional structures modeled on Javanese gamelan music: basic melodies punctuated by colotomic (time-keeping) instruments. Generally, 2nd graders can learn to play the instruments and compose a piece in an hour or less. With more time, players generally memorize the basic structure of the pieces, and are then free to expand improvisationally upon what they composed, with the ability to revert back to the basic part if they "get lost" or over-reach. The colotomic parts (gongs, lower chimes) give players a reference point for rejoining the main melody at any time.

As a result of the accessibility of the instruments and the music-making processes, I have had a lot of interest from Very Special Arts programs (a national organization with state branches, which fund arts

for people with disabilities). Through VSA, residencies featuring the gamelan and accompanying shadow-puppet shows have occurred in youth day treatment centers, special education classrooms, as a university practicum, and lately with detained juveniles.

Youth in detention are a special population. They are mostly very smart, very disenfranchised from "regular" society, suspicious of authority (I could be describing a few free improvisors I know:-).

During my two one-week residencies with them, I adopted the following approach: I suggested that my instruments and processes could be viewed by them as tools to deliver a message to the outside world, which was ignoring them because they were teenagers, and incarcerated ones at that. I asked them to choose an intended audience that they could teach, and they chose young kids. Through brainstorming, discussion, and consensual decision-making, we developed 6 shadow-show advice videos with gamelan music. The topics they covered included: don't steal, don't do drugs, stay in school, don't join a gang, question peer pressure, and wait to have sex. The detention center staff allowed the youth to really explore these topics, which helped a great deal, though of course it resulted in puppets with "crack pipes" and semi-automatic weapons.

What other types of residencies have you done?

Other residencies have occurred with local arts councils, business associations, churches, and city/county-funded summer youth camps, all of which want a youth arts activity that kids really enjoy, and which includes a performance element to demonstrate the value of the activity to parents and community funding sources.

How does Puppetmaking tie in with improvisation?

Involving shadow puppetry along with the gamelan music, an Indonesian tradition, means that students can participate in a wide variety of artistic disciplines. This includes music, both instrumental as well as singing, visual arts, and movement. I use multiple puppeteers, and they develop an intricate, improvised "ballet" behind the screen, playing with shadow size, drama, improvising or writing scenes for the puppets. The entire experience feels very complete to me. It is also one of the few instances in residency work where I have been able to really play with my students; I usually do the main drumming for the gamelan, and no holds barred! My polyrhythmic explorations actually seem to inspire the students to include rhythmic variations on their parts, which helps give the music more texture and is also more fun for them. I also sometimes play suling (Javanese flute), with one or more students improvising along with me.

Tell us some highlights in your work. Did the kids write the script or did you? what was the ratio of music, text, improv theatre, character building, rehearsing vs. creating vs. performing... Can you include some text from some of the events?

The juvenile detention work is probably the most satisfying combination of art and social activism I've done to date. My own agenda with the work was that the youth would take their own messages seriously enough to develop them carefully. Also, that they would find satisfaction in giving back to the

community in a positive, helpful way, and that they would begin to abandon destructive and self-destructive patterns of behavior as a result. I also wanted to prepare the youth to discuss this project with their judges and probation officers--to give them something positive to say about themselves. By encouraging individual contributions to a group product, I felt I was offering the youth the opportunity to both "fit-in" as well as retain their individuality. I wanted them to question "the way things are" and to live with the questions--to let the questions be a part of our work together.

Can you give an example of some text from one of the events?

Here is one text the youth wrote, along with the accompanying music and song they composed.

Spending a fair amount of time at the start on personal introductions was very helpful. My first question--"tell us a little about someone who helped you a lot when you were young"--provoked both short and long answers from the students. Most of the short answers named non-parents (usually grandparents or friends' parents); the long answers went into detail about the sort of help offered and how it had kept them out of some bad situations. This beginning centered the work for the whole week, and was something to continue to refer to.

In the discussion of themes, students raised the issue of a lack of adult-sanctioned activities for teens in the area, and several said activities like this one would be a good positive outlet for young people who would otherwise be on the streets. "How come we only get to do this when we're locked up?" one youth asked. Another youth, upon receiving the news of his imminent release midway through the project, asked if he could stay to finish the show.

That's very positive. What about difficulties?

Most of the difficulties during this project stemmed from the opposite approaches necessitated by collaborative arts projects and "behavior management" facilities.

Peer Pressure

Candyman: What's up Betty? Why don't you do business with me and make some easy money?

Betty: I don't know. Let me think about it.

Jose: Get away from my sister, Candyman. She don't need your drug money.

Antonio: Come on, Cuz. Come with me--we can smoke some weed or drink some alcohol. What are you scared of?

Man: You all don't need to get into all of this mess. There are a lot of better things to do than this.

Antonio: Mind your own business old man--get out of here!

Grandma: I've been looking for you everywhere. Let's get away from these bad influences. I'll take you to the movies or to get something to eat.

Betty: They're always trying to pressure me into doing things that I know are wrong.

Grandma: You have a choice, but only you can make the right decision that's good for your future.

Betty: Thank you, Grandma, for being such a positive influence. I'm going to start finding more positive things to do.

Music/Lyrics

//: 7 7 7 7 7 . 6 . 7 1 1 . : \\\

*If you choose to do this stupid stuff
Life for you will end up rough and tough
Curiosity can kill the child
Listen to your heart and don't run wild*

Collaborative arts projects work best when participants feel free to contribute any idea or direction for the work--especially at the start--when discussion is unbounded, and where participants' feelings about the content of the work and about the process are elicited in order to begin shaping the work. As the project evolves, participants must then "take ownership" of what we have developed, honor the decisions made by the group along the way, and concentrate more completely on the agreed-upon activities/directions. There is a narrowing of freedom in this sense.

The "behavioral management" approaches most commonly used in detention begin with little or no freedom for new detainees, whose good behavior under these circumstances results in increased freedom. After the heady initial experience of some artistic/personal freedom, a few students were reluctant to restrict their behavior in order to achieve a coherent final group product. This may have been especially so because the work focused on the reasons that many of the youth were in the Center to begin with. This focus made the work extremely personal, and raised many difficult emotions for all of us. (I was a juvenile offender once myself).

One rather amusing incident occurred during the writing of the "Wait to Have Sex" segment. After my careful explanation of the elements I thought would make a memorable little song (good rhythm to the words, and an end-rhyme), one student volunteered, "Cover your stump before you hump." It was one of the few contributions from this particular youth, the class loved it, and I just knew it would never make it in the door of the elementary school. But how was I to bring him to realize this? It took me a while to remember that the focus of the piece was on waiting to have sex, not on having safe sex, and our song evolved later into "If you wait to date, things will turn out great; understand the plan--it's hugs and holding hands." Perhaps dating does lead to sex.

This work of the youth in detention is currently being edited for a videotape to be distributed through the public schools in Southern Indiana.

How did you become involved with a multi-generational church gamelan project? What's that all about?

While I was in graduate school, I gave a presentation about my work with the homemade gamelan instruments, and one of the attendees was the music director at a local church. He and his wife hoped to start a youth program, and asked me to do some workshops. Gamelan proved popular not just with youth, but with entire families, who could all participate in this music-making approach. We developed two gamelan church services, including gamelan versions of traditional hymns, and new songs that we composed. The church leaders were impressed enough by this multi-generational involvement that they earmarked funds to buy a set of instruments from me. The accessibility of the instruments proved itself again in this context because one of the parishioners is blind, and he was able to drum and play gong with the group.

Are your after-school projects funded? Do you write the grants and run them through non-profit organizations, or do the administrators write them and then hire you?

It works both ways. Financially, I am unable to offer any of my work for free, so grants or fundraising are mandatory. Often, I do work in advance of receiving the money, which is sometimes a bit risky, but

it usually comes out all right sooner or later. I generally co-write my grants with organizers, so that their needs are addressed appropriately, and my approaches are clearly delineated. Each project has different goals, different participants, and a different time-frame, but the essentials (group involvement in collective creativity with individual options) remain the same.

So when you run these gamelan orchestras, and nobody has to be able to read music, how is it organized.

Perhaps I should clarify the "no one has to be able to read music" statement, for we are reading music (at the start anyway), but not Western notation. In most situations, the group composes short, cyclical pieces following a Javanese balungan (musical "skeleton") pattern, which dictates where certain time-keeping instruments will play, and which provides a series of numbers for the musicians. The time-keepers help to orient those who "get lost" (and emphasize inter-dependence), and the drum serves as the tempo indicator. I use certain drum cues to indicate dynamic changes, which are often dictated to me by the needs of the puppet scene being played out (loud and fast for action, soft and slow for dialogue). When these things happen is purely up to the puppeteers, which is why cyclical music, without a set number of repeats, works so well. So there is notation, but most of the pieces are short enough that the players can memorize them within one playing. That's when the fun begins!

I demonstrate lots of possible interlocking parts for various instruments to play, and players often generate their own. When a player is unable to do this in the rhythm of the piece, or falters, I always encourage them to return to the basic balungan (one note per beat) until they feel comfortable enough to branch out again. I have done a few free improv versions of the gamelan, and the tuning of the instruments enables this to sound quite musical even to non-free-improvers, provided the rhythm is stable.

Occasionally, students have composed pieces which incorporate free improvisation, usually creating a mood or natural environment. "Random Raindrops before a Thunderstorm" was one. Another was "Random swooping waves" up and down on the instruments to accompany an underwater scene. Working with adults, I've composed a free improv piece which combined a wind quintet playing only non-gamelan notes with the gamelan finding the pitch generated by the largest instrument and improvising rhythmically on that pitch, once they find it. This piece was part of a two-hour shadow show I wrote while at Wesleyan, which involved about 20 college and community musicians/puppeteers, and an after-school gamelan program of 25 4th and 5th graders.

All of the pieces have elements of free improv, but these are usually reserved for what the Javanese refer to as "flowering instruments"-- instruments like the suling (flute) and celempung (zither) which ornament the basic patterns. The drumming is also usually improvised, though rhythmic. Some times the drumming accentuates the physicality of the puppets.

So far, the mix of composed and improvised opportunities has worked well with most groups, where people want to "fit in" with a large group, but may also want to express their individuality. I also like the fact that the players are free to choose if and when they will go out on the improv limb.

It has seemed to me like a well-rounded musician, familiar and comfortable with many different musical styles and forms--but master of none--might be one definition of mastery in our multicultural society.

My previous work with large groups improvising used the improv orchestra techniques I observed in Birmingham at the festival I attended. Unlike the gamelan work, this approach does involve a conductor, but what the players play is largely up to them. In gamelan, there is no conductor per se, but parts of the music are "set." Of course, all musical performance has an aleatoric option, referred to in Western classical music as the dreaded "flub" or, for a soloist playing from memory, "temporary amnesia". Too bad those moments are nearly rehearsed out of existence!

Are you still involved with Ut Gret? What's up with Ut Gret?

Ut Gret, that infamous pan-idiomatic improvising ensemble begun in Santa Cruz, transplanted to Louisville, is still at it! Joe Conroy, the remaining founding member, is still the hub of the wheel, and we perform regularly (though unpredictably) in Louisville and occasionally elsewhere (when invited--Ahem!). We will be playing a rather unusual wedding this spring (our last wedding gig resulted in a rather rapid divorce, but I don't think that was our fault), and we will be presenting our musical approaches to the University of Louisville next month. The ensemble, which swells and shrinks according to musician availability and musical avenues pursued, has recently begun to use more of my homemade instruments. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, we will release a CD of my instruments being played by various incarnations of Ut Gret.

In summarizing, what else would you like to say about your work?

One thing I have realized about my work with my homemade versions of gamelan and with the Ewe drums is that it straddles a number of fences. It derives from a traditional or "classical" music, albeit from somewhere else. It is cross-cultural. It has elements of improvisation and composition. And it often mingles with a number of other art forms. This results in many good conversations about the purpose of music in our lives, and the state of the arts in terms of community participation in most environments. I love the fact that in Indonesia, playing in the village, gamelan is considered a form of community service, and I wish that "just doing it" (music, that is) in whatever way--free improv, rock band, orchestra, drum circle--were more prevalent and more relevant to our daily lives here. I love to convince people, through experiences they have with my ensembles, that there are many different ways to carry a tune besides just your standard bucket.

International Society for Improvised Music

I.S.I.M.

Third annual conference

"Improvisation and Identity: Discovering Self and Community in a Trans-Cultural Age"



University of Denver, Dec 5-7, 2008. Friday-Sunday

When **Charlie Parker** stated that "if you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn," he conveyed, in his inimitable way, the capacity of improvisation to serve as a vehicle for integrating the totality of influences that shape personal and social identity. From class, culture, economics, and ecology to gender, race, sexuality, and spirituality; improvising musicians spontaneously meld these and other aspects of their being in expressions that serve as both profound personal and collective commentaries. In an era in which unprecedented levels of superficiality, alienation, and violence often overshadow a growing interest in creative and transpersonal development, and where an ever-escalating morass of data threatens to engulf a genuine cross-fertilization between disciplines and cultures; the importance of a creative vehicle for accessing and expressing one's inner and outer worlds has never been greater. Improvisation not only excels in this regard, it also—through the very moment-to-moment decision-making sequences that require individuals to penetrate beyond ordinary patterns of behavior—may exemplify the dissolution of provincial and nationalistic tendencies that divide communities and countries in our politically fragile world. Improvisation, in fact, may be the ultimate lens through which the quest for self and community is revealed to be as much a collective as a personal endeavor. -Ed Sarath, President ISIM

The 2008 Third Annual Conference Report

Keynote Address: Roscoe Mitchell

Featured Performers and Speakers: Joelle Leandre and India Cooke

Why join an organization to improvise? There's just something to be said for getting out of your own backyard, or community, and joining at the crossroads of academia vs. practice. Diversity being the main theme of this, and many of the I.S.I.M. conferences, the conference brings together many artists, listeners, educators, researchers, and professional practitioners of the art of improvisation. From the grass-roots experimenters of small communities from around the United States, to the academic theorists and philosophers, to well and lesser known jazz greats, student ensembles, laptop orchestra, inventors of home-made musical instruments, ensemble paradigms of contemporary classical forms, forms of musical meditation and minimalism, to multi-ethnic fusion, the broad spectrum of improvisation in both life and musical experience points to the common ground of our encounters.

This being the annual conference of the Society of Improvised Music, a three-day whirlwind event. Never a moment of rest, with more presenter choices than one can possibly attend, musicians and scholars meet at the crossroads and witness the practice of improvised music, the discussions surrounding and relating to the process of uncertainty, and unpredictability in society, reflected in the intuitive processes that frequently solve the experiences of the moment not only in our practice of music making, but in life itself. From the development of cohesion and flow, from fragments and beginnings, into shapes and excursions, we investigate the course of this music and the relationships that it encourages.

Many themes were presented from *Transcending Boundaries to Enrich the Collective Whole* by Andrew Goodrich to *Exploring the Unknown: Accepting Uncertainty* by panelists Charity Chan, Simon Rose, and Cesar Villavicencio. Practical methods were presented, from *Integrating Improvisation and Composition with Technology* by Christian Pincock to *Improvisation and How People Talk with Each Other* by Misha Glouberman. These are just a few examples of some of the presentations that you might expect to catch at an I.S.I.M. Conference.

Out of the woodwork, this year's conference also had a greater presence of *grass-roots* presenters, unassociated with academia, but practitioners of improvised music from the base of players and presenters in non-academic communities. Notably here was the presence of master percussionist and improviser extraordinaire, Tatsuya Nakatani, who gave a practical review of his everyday life on tour in Europe, Japan and America. Also, special to this year was the presence of the Shaking Ray Levi Society, from Chattanooga Tennessee, who presented "*Old-Timey Avant-garde in the New South*," a rich and inspiring talk on some of the ways that the Society has enriched the community through performances, but also through "hands-on" workshops in improvisation aimed at Senior Citizens, Children with Autism, the deaf and the blind.

Also in the grass-roots sector, none other than an enormous showing of presence of the Denver and Boulder communities that hosted the conference, diverse groups of artists and venues presenting through lively panel discussions, sharing of information and performance. Local groups who performed included Rhythmic Void, The Playground, and the Boulder Improviser's Collective.

In Touch: Listening to Transparency in Improvisational Music Therapy

presented by a classically educated pianist, Carol Arnason, from Canada, in which she shared reflections on improvisation and identity, through musical excerpts, clinical examples and personal narratives.

Janet Feder and the Naropa Ensemble performed improvisations incorporating elements of

Buddhist Contemplative Practice, with a vocal sounding of the room, moving to instrumental dialogs based on games, structures, and exercises.

TAG (Trans-cultural Alliance Group) explores with field recordings, electronics, projection, and structured improvisations, sonic meta cultural experience in signal and game processes. Computer networks, technological advances in subliminal communication bordering conscious recognition of diverse & distant societies and foreign memetic constructions.

Sarah Weaver presented on *Deep Tones for Peace,a co-located performance for peace in the Middle East, taking place April 25, 2009 between Jerusalem and New York, streamed world-wide. Twenty internationally recognized bassists will perform together in an artistic act for peace, connected live on the internet. Project co-ordinators include Mark Dresser, Sarah Weaver, Jean-Claude Jones, Barre Phillips and Suzanne Thorpe. Deep Tones for Peace will be presented by I.S.I.M. in partnership with the World Association of Former United Nations Interns and Fellows, the International Society of Bassists, the Electronic Music Foundation, and affiliated organizations world-wide.*

The Diversity Panel, which included panelists Ed Sarath, Karlton Hester, and India Cooke packed the hall, and provided a very lively discussion on the complex issue of diversity as it relates to improvised music. Including a broad range of "diversity divides" including race, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and other factors, including the schism that separates African and European improvised musical streams and practices, and that which separates the long-standing marginalization of improvised music in musical academe, and that of "hands on" jazz and improvisation practitioners at large. I.S.I.M announced it's new diversity initiative as an important theme of the organization.

Roscoe Mitchell was the keynote speaker on the first session. A world-renowned solo performer and founding member of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, surprisingly, he did not even open his horn case, a disappointment to many of us. Instead, seated on stage behind a laptop and some papers, he presented a rather dry "informance" of some of the people and

projects that he was involved with in the 60's, with power-point slides of some of the visually based experiments of the day. Although interesting on it's own right, this presentation could have been presented in a classroom, and a more galvanizing presentation of a musical, and inspirational note would have been more appropriate for the gathering present at the I.S.I.M. opening session. It constituted a waste of his presence and talent in my opinion. Furthermore, on a tight schedule, he quickly whisked away from the conference, and was unavailable for any further contact or contribution.

Many other amazing performances were scattered throughout the day, and Showcase presentations were presented in the evening... Headliners for this year's I.S.I.M Conference were Joelle Leandre and India Cooke, a long-standing duo, who played a very high energy and engaging set on Friday night. I was invited to join them for two pieces, creating a violin-violoncello-bass trio, three diverse women improvisers from different geographical and cultural backgrounds upping the sonic energy in this first ever meeting of these three on stage. In the true spirit of improvisation, no rehearsal was necessary!

*Other performers of note during the festival aspect of the conference included Vinny Goliasolo woodwinds (a "powerhouse" performance!) an appearance by poet Trudy Morse, honoring Sun Ra in the opening of the first Showcase Concert, the Roman Stoylar and Susan Allen duo, Stringtrek-LaDonna Smith & Misha Feigin. From Italy, Gianni Mimos-Angelo Contini- Stefano Pastor in "Forgiving July". Trombonist Jen Baker with a slideshow *Barns of Music*, Afro-Celtic Improvisations for voice and hand percussion by Judith Coe and Salil Sachdev. Paul Riola and Bottesini- an incredibly interesting jazz based ensemble consisting of Paul Riola, Vinny Golias, Michael Vlatkovich, Glen Taylor, James Hoskins, Doun Anderson and Antwon Owens. There was the Electro Acoustic Duo of David Borgo and Jeff Kaiser, Mark Harris and the Random Axe Trio. Also of note were improv-compositions for brass and piano by Michael Jeffrey Stephens, Stephanie Phillips and the Texas State Improvisation Ensemble stood out as a notable classically influenced entity, Norman Lowrey and Singing Masks were as otherworldly as the Avatar Orchestra : Virtually Yours - a mixed reality performance online with members spread across three continents including Tina*

Pearson, Viv Corringham, Norman Lowrey, Tom Bickley and Pauline Oliveros. Nebraska based Jay Kreimer presented a "hands on" workshop with home-made musical inspirations. There was the improvisation driven electro acoustic ensemble, Chris Chalfant's Looking through Trees for Multi-media, the EarWorm Improvisation Ensemble, among others. The University of Colorado Jazz Combo, Boulder Laptop Orchestra, the Playground, Rhythmic Void, and the Boulder Improviser's Collective, all active in the local improv scene were well represented in the conference program.

Included in the agenda was the I.S.I.M annual meeting, and a responsive closing remarks and feedback session.

The **International Society for Improvised Music** celebrated performances, discussions, papers, workshops, and other presentations for its third successful conference during December 2008. The theme is compatible across wide-ranging approaches to improvised performance, it invites wide-ranging pedagogical applications, and suggests connections to wide-ranging, cross-disciplinary areas. **I.S.I.M.** is committed to diversity in its programming. In this way, we hope to grow the organization to be a springboard for individuals and organizations to meet, connect, collaborate, and support a vision for the role of improvisation in the future of music and world applications.

-LaDonna Smith,

ISIM Board of Directors

Members submit conference proposals in performance, pedagogy, papers & workshops.

For more information and instructions for joining **I.S.I.M.**

please visit www.isimprov.org .

An Improvisational life

By Michael Keith

2007

I recently had an epiphany: I have been an improviser all my life.

My earliest memories are of spontaneously creating characters and settings for them to do things. Yes, I suppose most of us did this --but most of us forget this. When I was about 10 years old I would make up my own melodies on a small electric organ my parents had. I would do this for hours. Sometimes just a couple notes, back and forth, back and forth -what joy! My parents became interested only when I mimicked part of "Silent Night". They got a teacher for me. He told what to do. YUCK. He was unimpressed with my fiddling around on the keys. Why? I stopped the lessons. I went back to my spontaneous adventure games. No one ever told me what to do there.

At 13 I wanted a guitar. I liked rock music and the people playing it looked like they were having fun. I got an acoustic from the department store. I scratched at the strings, I pulled at them, I struck them with other things, and I played with the tuners and so on... tons of fun! NO. This was not music I was told. You need direction. A few lessons in I quit.

Years later the bug was back. I was getting a little old (according to society) to play with imaginary friends doing imaginary things, so I went back to the guitar. I worked at it like mad. I got the basic chords and strumming together and now I was off. I began creating my own instrumental pieces based on improvisation. I didn't know that it was improvising -I just knew that it felt right! "Play a song" everyone would say. "Why?" I thought. Everybody does that. Sometimes to seek approval I would compare my improvisations to recognizable things for people. "Here is a train" I'd say, "here is a spider". My English teacher in high school said I should try drama class to get this creative energy out. Why act? I WAS getting it out.

Eventually I learned to play guitar quite well. Lessons wouldn't work for me, only

listening would. I listened to everyone and everything. I learned to play country, jazz, blues, rock, punk, funk, junk you name it. I traveled and recorded quite a bit for a number of years but I wasn't happy. The music was the same night after night. I drank a lot –a real lot. After about a year off and getting sober I discovered that there are so many other players like me and I was amazed. When I quit worrying about how to make ends meet with my music/gift it all seemed to make sense.

I am so grateful, and excited to be an improviser at this point in my life. I now enjoy playing music that I disliked for a long time. I perform and record regularly now as an improvising musician.

I teach guitar as well. I inform my guitar students about the beauty of improvising freely. I tell them that despite what some people may say, improvised music is traditional, basically the first music on this planet. I see their eyes light up (in a somewhat joyous disbelief) when I applaud them for sticking a piece of paper under their strings or something .

Some artistic preoccupations 2006

... a personal report from MKE

Thomas Gaudynski

Talking with poet and educator Marty Rosenblum at a party on New Year's Day 2006, we discussed some contemporary concerns:

- collecting, appreciating, and disseminating the arc of your own work over a lifetime
- seeking to reach the potential young audience for your work through new methods of communication such as iTunes, podcasts, myspace, and youtube etc.
- helping young people (our students) explore the past so that they can create their own future
- being aware of the machines of culture that suppress the spirit for the purpose of consumption and for creating a profit
- realizing what little shared cultural experience there is today even between colleagues and friends

Retrospectively, the subject of these statements, that I wrote to sum up our conversation, would preoccupy many of my thoughts and explorations for the year.

In January, Hal Rammel and I got together to record sounds for what we hoped might prove as material for a collective composition. I went on to create some sound works with our multi-tracked source material and some selectively added manipulated voice recordings. The result, in the nature of a monster stitched together by Mary Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein, became prototypical compositions I called *Voice of Frankenstein*. The recordings remain in my iTunes library as monsters waiting to be animated through high voltage (or a fresh blank CDR) and set upon the world. God help us. (No serious request for copies of this unholy offspring denied; please e-mail for details and ordering information.)

Listening in February to Alvin Lucier at the Milwaukee Art Museum describe his working process in developing work was insightful. "I figure out what not to do; if it's extra baggage, then it's wrong."

Later that month, observing Bruce Nauman's neon work, also at MAM, brought into focus the issue of the authentic reproduction of art works. The majority of the pieces exhibited were labeled as "exhibition copies." No provenance, no aura. Merely constructed to represent originals. Only the "Corridor with Mirror and White Lights" was noted as belonging to the Tate Gallery, although it was clearly constructed in Milwaukee specifically for this installation. Where is the art? As with music, is a recording more authentic when you purchase it from Ye Olde Record store, iTunes, the artist at a gig, or just listen to it on myspace?

Publishing recordings of music now moves away from only creating CDs in un/limited editions with their cost and distribution challenges to on-demand editions, podcasts, or downloadable MP3s. If the focus is on the music and getting the music into the listener's environment, static recorded objects become collectors items for listeners of an older generation. Our relocated native son, Jon Erickson, writes in *The Fate of The Object*, "The big question in art or in an artful life, is whether to allow others to objectify you or to try to take control of your own objectification." St. Jon: patron of self-objectifiers.

While trying to put some of my things in storage in April, I came across some DAT tapes of improvised guitar solos I recorded at the end of 1998 and early 1999. Upon listening back after all these years, I picked out eight of them that sounded unique and showed where my guitar playing was heading after nearly a decade of neglect. In a way, it help me discover the foundation of the solo work that began with *Elementals* in 2001 and the ensemble playing with Audiotrope which only really came together around 2000. The result is *Solo 99* (Let me know if you want a copy.) I also came to realize that these completist collections of solo work, like *3 Years Ago Tomorrow* and *Pipe Balm*, could be published as on-demand recordings; and in fact the last two had been and it was ok not to obsess about the legitimacy of the package and edition. It's about the music.

Reading Robert Storr's "An Interview with Ilya Kabakov," quoted in Irving Sandler's *Art of the Postmodern Era: From the late 1960s to the early 1990s*, made it clear to me for the first time that the innovations of modern artists (collage, readymade, use of noise, chance, etc.) I had been teaching to my students, were combined, juxtaposed, and used ironically by so-called post-modern artists beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "Today's postmodernist works with readymade artistic languages," observed Kabakov. It made me realize I could teach art history prior to that time as a set of modules and building blocks that became the colors in my student's paint boxes from which they would create new art.

I began work in July on a list of modern art innovations with descriptions, references, principle artistic innovator or subsequent successful practicing entrepreneur, etc. I drafted, almost ironically, a post-modern art maker process where by choosing one concept, action, method, technology, material, or type of artifact from lists, you could develop a recipe to create your own work of post-modern art. For example, readymade

+ collage + abstraction + video + light + performance (combined) = work of post-modern art. Question: should this be a board game, a funny essay, a curriculum for a course of study, a serious essay, or just something that remains in my notes? Subscriptions excepted gladly.

Walter Gropius stated in his Bauhaus manifesto of 1919 that “art cannot be taught.” On a visit to Madison last summer and my favorite Borders store in Wisconsin, I found James Elkin’s *Why Art Cannot Be Taught*. Inside, he writes, “Do you really want your children (or your students) to appreciate the same people you appreciate?” Recently, while listening to Sir Ken Robinson speak on-line at www.ted.com/tedtalks about creativity and education, he reminded everyone, especially educators, that children entering kindergarten today will graduate in 2065. What can we do to prepare them for the future when we don’t even know what the world will be like in 2010?

The positioning statement for my Spring 2006 class at Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design stated: “**Sound + Art + Language** is a historical survey of sound, language and visual art and where they intersect as intermedia during the twentieth century. The course challenges students to explore history through action as well as reflection and analysis and expects nothing less than transformation.” The positioning statement for my Spring 2007 class at MIAD states: “**From Utopia to Today** is an exploration of the designers, artists and think-tanks that used their utopian visions to create the concepts, media and products we take for granted today. Students will participate through reading, listening, observing, research, writing, and discussion.”

I thought educational chauvinism might rear its ugly head during my interview in spring with both the deans of fine art and design for an opportunity to teach a studio class in MIAD’s Time-Based Media curriculum on *Introduction to Sound*. This was a class that I thought I had been in training to teach since circa 1974; perhaps one of the longest on-the-job educational gestations on record. Fortunately, or unfortunately for the students, other than a brief question during the interview about the lack of the requisite degree (in what subject?), in the end it turned out that the school couldn’t cover my fee anyway.

My friend, colleague, and client, Paul Krajniak asked me during lunch this fall what I would do at a place like MIAD if I could wave a magic wand. Was he a jinnee to tempt me with a Shahrazadian story of wonders beyond imagining? I didn’t hesitate but replied I would get rid of the division of the school by discipline-based deans; would replace the foundations curriculum with a curriculum about ideas and concepts not techniques; would insist on multi-disciplinary study for all students; would integrate the artistic and design curriculum with the study of innovation, technology, sustainability, and biomimicry; would invite the most outstanding doers in their respective fields to participate as educators; would get rid of tenure positions; would insist that potential fine artists studied applied and practical arts and that applied artists studied the fine arts; and a variety of other initiatives now lost in the fugue of sweetened middle-eastern tea. Was it only a dream?

I was pleased that Jamal Currie, the full-time instructor at MIAD, charged with bootstrapping the time-based media program, invited me to submit a work to his exhibit *Calling Forth Certain Experiences* which ran from October 31 through December 16, 2006. His call for entries stated, "I hope for this exhibition to be an educational display of work by media artists, hinting at the breadth and diversity of form-in-time that time-based media artists work with." I responded by reworking my composition *Grand Canyon*, from 2003 appearing on *3 Years Ago Tomorrow*, and forming it into a podcast-type recording with tongue-in-cheek musical and spoken introduction, and additional text content culled from Walker Percy's essay *The Loss of the Creature* and Dean MacCannell's study *The Tourist: New Theory of the Leisure Class*. The result, *Grand Canyon, Reconsidered*. An attempt to meet pedagogy with critique and comment from an outsider point of view. Posted on www.myspace.com/thomasgaudynski through December 16, 2006 when the exhibit ends.

Bertolt Brecht's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* rose to the surface a few times this year. In the spring, I listened to the Columbia LP recording with Lotte Lenya and listened a few times in the car to another CD version borrowed from East Library. Then, while reading through Ronald Hayman's *Brecht: A Biography*, I noted, "It was apropos Mahagonny that Brecht made a detailed and explicit formulation about Epic Theatre. Marx and Sternberg had convinced him that works of art were not only being conditioned by the "network" of publishers, newspapers, opera houses and theatres that mediated between artist and the public, but being judged according to their value as material for the network. The intention in *Mahagonny*, he said, was that 'some irrationality, unreality, and frivolity should be introduced in the right places to assert a double meaning.'" Brecht saw the entire "network" as a machine of culture that censored out art to make way for consumer goods. I haven't experienced any substantially different behavior from today's media. Have you?

In the fall I saw Harry Smith's film version of *Mahagonny* at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee with its refracted and split screen images that accompany the Columbia recording, scene by scene. Smith was grappling with trying to reflect his view of New York society through the lens of Brecht's creation. Mahagonny is a city of nets designed to trap individuals and part them from their money as they spend it satisfying their grossest desires.

After listening to both Ilhan Mimoraglu's tape music that I downloaded from some fan site, and the works by artist Jean Dubuffet that Mimoraglu published on his Finnadar LP label in the 1970s, Hal Rammel suggested I read Dubuffet's *Asphyxiating Culture* which I found on-line stored on Tier 3 of the main Milwaukee Public Library. Dubuffet states, "I am an individualist; that is to say that I consider it my role as an individual to oppose all constraints brought about by the interests of the social good. The interests of the individual are opposed to those of the social good. Wanting to serve both at once can only lead to hypocrisy and confusion." And later, "Now, the essence of arts creation is innovation, at which professors will be less apt as they will have long sucked the milk of works of the past...The creative spirit is as

opposed as possible to that of the professor.” So there.

Upon discovering the work of trumpeter and cartoonist Mazen Kerbaj, of Beirut, Lebanon during the Lebanese and Israeli “conflict,” I began writing an essay about art in the time of war: *We’re at war. Other countries are at war. The whole global political environment seems to be laced with war. How do artists deal with this situation? How do art audiences find enjoying and appreciating art when issues and situations of life and death are pressing at our consciousness? ¶ It is said that every act is political. Artists may generally eschew this sentiment in the pursuit of art for art’s sake, but if they truthfully examine themselves and their acts they come to learn that everything anyone does, every choice anyone makes is part of the body politic. Do your actions support war, fight against war, survive war, wage war, or show ambivalence toward war? ¶ Midwestern American’s are pretty lucky. The bombs, terrorist attacks, invasions, death and destruction are not visiting us directly. Families of guardsman and soldiers are affected, families with relatives in the wrong place at the wrong time may be affected, but most of us are insulated and just continue to read about and view these unpleasanties through the media. What do artists who live in the thick of war do?*

Like Kerbaj, they go on doing what they do with all the outrage and foregrounding they can to their circumstances. Visit Kerbaj’s blog at <http://mazenkerblog.blogspot.com>. Tom Raworth, in his poetry and music duo with Peter Brotzmann at Woodland Pattern Book Center this November read some of Kerbaj’s words giving me a chilling reminder that you can’t bury this work even if the bombs have stopped falling.

So tell me of artists today and their role in society? Mauric Tuchman in his book *From the Russian Avant-Garde and the Contemporary Artists* writes, “Richard Serra disparages the role of the American artists in society: ‘every artists I know is working for the shopkeeper, the gallery, or the museum;’ but the Russians implied something else.” I understand that in the context of commerce. Artists want to earn a living like everyone else, and who is it to refuse them their place in society? But then the New York Times publishes an article stating, “Don’t mistake them for Russians: Kazimir Malevich, El Lissitsky, Alexandr Rodchenko and Alexandra Exeter were actually born, or identified themselves as, Ukrainian.” *Crossroads: Modernism in Ukraine, 1910-1930* is a revisionist exhibit at the Ukrainian Museum in New York that I’ll miss this year. But the message is still clear. We work for the shopkeeper, gallery, or museum; not for the revolution or to improve society. I take some comfort in thinking of my work as fair trade. I exchange my work for the modest cost to produce and publish it. But I don’t fool myself that I provide more than artful entertainment.

Having participated in what I already took to be **two** digital revolutions—first the Macintosh/Postscript/Photoshop/Sound Edit era in the late-1980s and second the Netscape Browser/World Wide Web era in the mid-1990s—I wasn’t at first prepared for Lev Manovich’s assertion in *The Language of New Media* that, “Today we are in the middle of a **new** media revolution—the shift of all culture to computer mediated forms of production, distribution, and communications.” Those first two revolutions were required to bring about the production and distribution conversion of all forms of cultural communication. Today the

computer and its offspring such as game consoles, mobile phones, iPods, and whatever will be introduced this year in time for the holiday gift shopping season are the de facto locus and center of all that cultural content. Whether we paid attention, the revolution was televised and streamed to a computer in front of you.

The collective experiences of the past where everyone shared watching the same film or listening to the same song is long past. Yet audiences for content increase exponentially. Films and songs are still consumed by millions, but increasingly by individuals in their own personal bubbles. A shift has taken place from shared centralized space of a theatre to networked personal space in our mobile society.

In 1974 when I dreamed of owning a professional tape recorder or 1982 when I dreamed of owning a word processor, I looked forward to owning the means of production just as Brecht did lobbying for his own theatre. Today anyone with a laptop, microphone and desktop printer can create those old media artifacts of recordings and print. But with no more means of distribution than Brecht had fighting the network of cultural controllers. Ironically, just as the tools of production are placed in our hands, manufacturers shift their emphasis from tools to consumption. The dominant players from Apple to Microsoft now tailor their wares for us to consume someone else's content, not make it. "What do you want to do today?" really means what do you want to consume today.

Marilyn Crispell's solo piano performance in October at Woodland Pattern was a musical and social highlight. Crispell told the rapt audience of 40 or so that the WP gallery space was one of her favorite places to play in the world. Her musical gift was shared in a rare intimate experience with all those there. Earlier in the day she had held a "master's class" in improvisation for eight adventurous and lucky souls. Sorry if you missed either.

Some music recordings I listened to many times in 2006 included: *The Complete Works of Edgard Varèse* on Decca; *Anthony Braxton Quintet (London) 2004* on Leo; *Impro-Micro-Acoustique* (Noël Akchoté, Roland Auzet, Luc Ferrari) on Blue Chopsticks; Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble *Memory/Vision* on ECM; Fritz Hauser *Deep Time* on Deep Listening; *Earle Brown Chamber Music*, Dal Niente Projects on Matchless; Iannis Xenakis *Chamber Music 1956-1990* on Montaigne; Ilhan Mimoraglu's select electronic works downloaded on-line; Mauricio Kagel *Acoustica* downloaded from www.ubu.com; *Swim This* (Nick Didkovsky, Michael Lytle, Gerry Hemingway) downloaded on-line; and various editions of *Alternating Currents* downloaded from www.wmse.org/archive. Reading about Brecht, Moholy-Nagy, Yvonne Rainer, radical poetics, media theory, and discovering Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s *Cubism and Abstract Art* (20 years late), also took up some of my time.

Just this week, Maja Ratkje and the Norwegian trio POING of bass, accordion and sax, direct from the

Other Minds Festival in San Francisco and on their way to Chicago, NYC and Washington DC, performed at Hotcakes Gallery. This was another musical high point at the evolving experimental music series at Hotcakes Gallery (www.hotcakesmusic.com). Time to put them on your radar screen.

Peace for the new year and best wishes to all. Keep making music and art,

Thomas Gaudynski

Necessary Arts LLC

3134 N. Cambridge Ave.

Milwaukee, WI 53211 USA

414.962.3374

tgaudynski@mindspring.com

www.myspace.com/thomasgaudynski

SUBTROPICS 10

TRIBUTE TO JOHN CAGE

DETAILED SCHEDULE



Subtropics Experimental Music & Sound Arts Festival

February 23 – March 4, 2007

Carnival Center for the Performing Arts

info@subtropics.org

SUBTROPICS 19

miami's experimental festival of music and the sound arts
gustavo matamoros, artistic director

february 23 - march 4, 2007

merce cunningham and his dance company are coming for the first time to miami. and, it is fitting for subtropics to jump at the chance to revisit the music and legacy of one of the festival's favorite artists: composer **JOHN CAGE**

CONCERTS

schedule of concerts at
Carnival Center's Studio Theater
1300 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami



Saturday, 02/24/07
7 PM **TAKEHISA KOSUGI**

using violin, electronics and video, composer **takehisa kosugi** will be presenting a concert of mixed-media performing works. the program will include his versions of the early fluxus pieces **organic music** and **micro 1**

9:30 PM **CHRISTIAN WOLFF**

composer **christian wolff** performs an evening of his music for piano

a particular interest in his work has been to allow performers flexibility and ranges of freedom at the actual time of a piece's performance; to devise notations to make this practicable; to foster among both professional and lay players a spirit of liberating interdependence; and to draw material from traditions of popular political music



Sunday, 02/25/07

1 PM **JOHN KING**

composer **john king** (guitarist/composer) performs his music for electric guitar, electronics and video

he has performed live, solo and interactive computer music with the electronic music collectives unitygain and share at galapagos and open air in new york city over the past four years

3 PM **DAVID BEHRMAN**

composer **david behrman** performs his most recent electronic music

most of his pieces feature flexible structures and the use of technology in personal ways; the compositions usually rely on interactive real-time relationships with imaginative performers

9:30 PM **I, IV, V by 5 + 1** the music of john cage

the music of subtropics honoree, composer **john cage** featuring this year's stellar subtropics ensemble of **robert black** on bass, **helena bugallo** and **amy williams** on piano, **joan labarbara**, voice, and **jan**

williams on percussion

FURNITURE MUSIC ETCETERA

helena bugallo and amy williams

this piece for piano duet, combines, in a collage fashion, portions of erik satie's *musique d'ameublement* and cage's *etcetera*. cage organized the duration and recurrence of events in two parallel timetables, corresponding to each performer. the assignment of musical events, however, is made by the players. the title suggests that the piece can exist as one component of a larger environment. It will, therefore, take place tonight as a sort of prelude to the concert, with the piece and the sounds of the audience intermingling.

RYOANJI

joan la barbara, robert black and jan williams

ONE

helena bugallo

cCOMPOSED IMPROVISATION

robert black and jan williams

FOUR6 (1992)

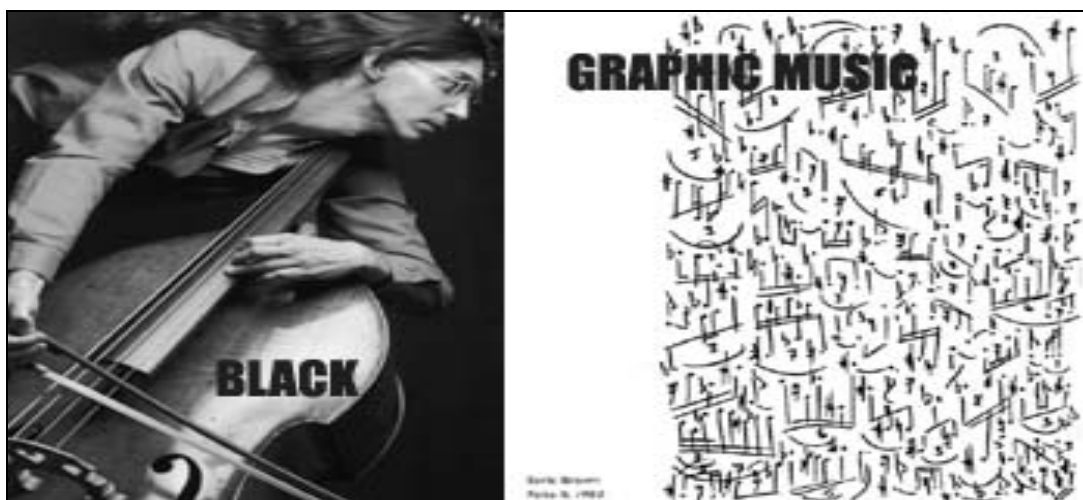
joan la barbara, robert black and jan williams and gustavo matamoros on electronics

for any way of producing sounds (vocalization, singing, playing of an instrument or instruments, electronics, etc.). choose twelve different sounds with fixed characteristics (amplitude, overtone structure, etc.). play within the flexible time-brackets given. when the time-brackets are connected by a diagonal line, they are relatively close together. - j.c.

FIVE

tutti

the five parts are for five voices or instruments or mixture of voices and instruments. time brackets are given. Within these the durations of tones are free, as are their beginnings and endings, which should be "brushed" in and out rather than turned on and off. - j.c.



Monday, 02/26/07

7 PM **ROBERT BLACK** double bass

soloist **robert black** performs the music of **john cage**, **somei satoh**, **james tenney** and **christian wolff**

STRING BASS EXCERCISE from 'BANDEITRA ROSSA' (1975) by christian wolff

BEAST (1971) by james tenney

From **26'1.1499" FOR STRING INSTRUMENT** (1955) by john cage

THE THIRD SPELL (2004) by somei satoh

LOOK SHE SAID (1991) by christian wolff

9:30 PM **GRAPHIC MUSIC** the music of earle brown, morton feldman and christian wolff

miami premieres of chamber music from graphic scores by **earle brown**, **morton feldman** and **christian wolff** featuring the subtropics ensemble of **robert black** on bass, **helena bugallo** and **amy williams** on piano, **joan labarbara**, voice, **gustavo matamoros**, saw, **jan williams** on percussion, with special guest **christian wolff** on piano

FOLIO II (c. 1970) by earle brown

tutti

FOR 1,2 or 3 PEOPLE (1964) by christian wolff

robert black, jan williams and christian wolff

FOLIO II (c. 1991) by earle brown

joan la barbara

IXION (for Piano Four Hands) by morton feldman

helena bugallo and amy williams

FOLIO II - E.B. for E. Blum (1994) by earle brown

robert black

FOLIO II (1980) by earle brown

tutti



Tuesday, 02/27/07

7 PM **JOAN LaBARBARA** voice - singing through cage

this program includes selections for solo voice as well as for voice and piano from her compact disc release **joan la barbara - singing through john cage** (new albion na035). guest pianist, **amy williams**

EXPERIENCES, No 2 for voice, unaccompanied (1948)

john cage composed this music for the dance by **merce cunningham** and completed it in 1948 in new york city. modal in flavor, the entire work is constructed of only 5 pitches, arranged as shifting modular motivic elements. cage experimented with notational anomalies, for example, staccato and tenuto articulation markings on the same notes, and with using silence as negative space, juxtaposing the presence of sound with the absence of it. there are notated silent measures indicated with multipliers of 3, 4 and 6, heightening the anticipation of the next moment of music, or allowing us to reflect on what has previously been heard. throughout his compositional output, cage experimented with different aspects of silence, the absence of intentional sound and our expectations and experiences of it, framed by the concert situation. the most notorious example of this was his work 4'33" (1952), which consists of 3 sections all designated tacet. the text used in "experiences no. 2" is from III, one of "sonnets – unrealities of tulips and chimneys" (1923) by e.e.cummings (appearing on page 62 of poems 1923-1954 by e.e.cummings). regarding his setting of cummings' poem cage wrote: "the last two lines were omitted. other lines and a word have been repeated or used in an order other than that of the original. the humming passages (not part of the poem) are interpolations." the original poem is as follows:

it is at moments after i have dreamed
of the rare entertainment of your eyes,
when (being fool to fancy) i have deemed

with your peculiar mouth my heart made wise;
at moments when the glassy darkness holds

the genuine apparition of your smile
(it was through tears always) and silence moulds
such strangeness as was mine a little while;

moments when my once more illustrious arms
are filled with fascination, when my breast
wears the intolerant brightness of your charms:

one pierced moment whiter than the rest

- turning from the tremendous lie of sleep
i watch the roses of the day grow deep.

[note by joan la barbara]

A FLOWER (1950)

although "a flower" (1950) is wordless, it opens gradually and introduces two startling moments when the vocalist is instructed to sing "like a pigeon" and "like a wild duck". cage indicates that it is to be sung in vocalize without vibrato, except, where indicated, as a rapidly repeated sound but not a pitch change.

ARIA (1958)

uses five languages: armenian, english, italian, french and russian, and ten different vocal styles to be chosen by the singer, interspersed with silences indicated by page space. the shape of the graphic suggests the contour and direction of the vocal line, with vertical space indicating pitch terrain. colors are used to assist the singer in reading the score and shifting from one (pre-determined) vocal style to another. [note by joan la barbara]

MIRAKUS 2 (1984/85)

are to be sung without vibrato, as in folk-singing, as lines of poetry, with spaces between lines suggested by numbers following each line. the texts are designed as "mesostics", that is between two capitalized letters neither of the two appear, and are derived from "marcel duchamp, notes" by alexina s. duchamp and paul matisse. they are called "mirakus" in reference to "mirage verbal", the central vertical line, and "haikus", the japanese short poetical form. cage used the *i ching* to determine the collection of pitches. [note by joan la barbara]

SOLOS FOR VOICE 49 AND 67 from "songbooks" (1970)

song books (1970) is a collection of 56 parts in "book I" and 34 parts in "book II." these vocal solos and theatrical pieces may be sung alone or simultaneously with other solos or with specific selections of cage's indeterminate music. the techniques cage used in determining the pitches and durations in these songs include tracings of star maps and distributing materials over page space by means of chance operations determined by the *i ching*, the chinese book of changes. "solo for voice 49" uses a fragment from henry david thoreau's journal. "solo for voice 67" (subtitled navajo yei-bi-chi) is accompanied by the sound of a pile driver. [note by joan la barbara]

- intermission -

EIGHT WHISKUS (1984)

eight whiskus (1984) was composed for joan la barbara and premiered during her 1985 recital series "new works

for the new voice" at symphony space in new york city. using "mesolist" and "i", programs designed for cage by jim rosenberg and andrew culver, respectively, eight "mesostics" were written on a text by australian poet **chris mann**, using the first three words of the text, "whistlin is did" as the central vertical row. (the rule for a "mesostic" is that between two capitalized letters neither of the two appears.) the "kus" of the title refers to the short poem form, haiku and "whis" is, of course, taken from "whistlin". when cage presented me with these songs, he played them on a toy piano, the only keyboard in his loft apartment at that time. he was so pleased with the results of "eight whiskus" that he composed a series of vocal works, all with titles ending in "kus".
a fragment of mann's original text appears below:

"whistlin is did be puckrin up th gob n blowin thru a ol a brownie sod th box n i seen a compo front up n stack on a blue a bit of a spoon th doodlers hump arguing by buying up all buns n juice crack a fudge a droopie go th roy n late th light not worth a pinch a *bleep* the Big H geech n that's a fine how d y do 1234 doin twos a whos up who n blinkin cheek a one jump sit y ring n warby kinda facts that double dutch or wear th daks n though I says it as shouldn't the lips yd smack d be th biggest dill y meet "

MUSIC FOR THREE (BY ONE) (1984)

"**music for ...** " consists of up to seventeen parts for voice and instruments without score, the title of which is completed by adding to "music for ..." the number of player performing. In this case, la barbara has chosen superimpositions of different sections of the score, layering two parts on tape and adding a third section live.

ONE 7 (1990)

one7 (1990) belongs to cage's final series of "number" pieces in which time brackets indicate when a sound is to begin and end. numbers indicate different sonic material to be chosen at the discretion of the player. the solo "one7" is taken from "**four6,**" composed for **joan la barbara, leonard stein and william winant** which was performed by them with cage at his final concert appearance july 23, 1992 at summerstage in new york city's central park.

THE WONDERFUL WIDOW OF EIGHTEEN SPRINGS (1942)

the wonderful widow of eighteen springs (1942) uses just three pitches to explore fragments from james joyce's "finnegan's wake" with rapping and tapping on the piano body and closed keyboard cover hinting at sounds of a strange forest.

NOWTH UPON NACHT (1984)

nowth upon nacht is a companion piece, composed in 1984 in memoriam cathey berberian. It also uses texts from "finnegan's wake" but, in sharp contract to the serenity of the work which precedes it, this is to be sung like a wild banshee shriek.

9:30 PM **BUGALLO/WILLIAMS** piano duo

this program is organized around two polar opposites: the highly deterministic, mechanical music of

conlon nancarrow's **studies for player piano** and the highly in-deterministic feldman work, **two pianos**. lying somewhere in between these extremes are pieces by salvatore sciarrino and an unusually "free" canon for two pianos, also by nancarrow

STUDIES FOR PLAYER PIANO #3b, #20, #9 by conlon nancarrow

discouraged by poor performances of his early works, including the **sonatina** (originally written for solo piano—here performed in an arrangement by yvar mikhashoff for piano four-hands), conlon nancarrow turned to the player piano in the late 1940s. the "sonatina" is the first work that nancarrow punched onto paper rolls, in order to be able to hear it accurately represented. this led him to an exhaustive exploration of this unusual medium, resulting in a series of approximately fifty studies for player piano, both highly idiomatic and utterly original. canonic procedures, particularly those in which the voices are in different speeds, are used in nearly all the "studies," ranging from polyrhythmic imitation (#3b, #6, #9) to strict polytempo canons (#20, #32, #18, #15). these studies require absolute precision in performance, with limited interpretational freedom in regards to phrasing and dynamics. after repeated, failed attempts to precisely synchronize his two player pianos, nancarrow opted to introduce an aleatoric component in the conception of **study #44**. the work's unusual focus is thus on the always-evolving relationship between the two parts, rather than on their exact temporal relationship. he wrote: "this piece is for two non-synchronized pianos (a & b). the piece is so designed that the two parts can be played at any temporal relationship. best results are obtained if one part is played at a tempo that takes about one minute to complete one cycle and the other at a tempo slightly faster or slower, so that both can go through about ten cycles, with each cycle producing a slightly different relation between the two parts."

SONATINA by conlon nancarrow

TWO PIANOS by morton feldman

this piece was premiered in december 1957 by david tudor and john cage. precise pitches are indicated (as opposed to his entirely graphic scores from around the same time), but not rhythms. as in "study #44," both pianists play the same music, but, because of the rhythmic freedom, the effect is of a canon with constantly shifting roles of "leader" and "follower."

STUDY FOR PLAYER PIANO #44 (aleatory canon) by conlon nancarrow

SONATA FOR TWO PIANOS by salvatore sciarrino

the music of italian composer **SALVATORE SCIARRINO** often places great demands on the instrumentalists, especially by challenging traditional methods of playing. In his very early **SONATA FOR TWO PIANOS**, the two performers must simultaneously operate in two mindsets: one characterized by a great deal of indeterminacy (no precise rhythms, pitches, dynamics, or tempi are specified) and the other dominated by extremely precise ornamentation (black and/or white note glissandi of varying lengths, no less than fourteen different types of trills, and a wide range of clusters). the gesture of ornamentation is brought to the forefront. the work is in two movements: sonata allegro and minuet/trio. the "classical" devices of imitation, themes, diatonicism, modulation, development and recapitulation are clearly incorporated, but with an entirely novel sonic result.

STUDIES FOR PLAYER PIANO #32, #18, #6, #15 by conlon nancarrow



Wednesday, 02/28/07

7 PM **SUBTROPICS MARATHON** new music by various festival artists

the 19th edition of the subtropics marathon will include performances and works by **russell frehling**, **juraj kojs**, **juan carlos espinosa**, **rene barge**, **armando martinez**, and other south florida based artists. this year's marathon special guest is the fabulous **margaret lancaster**, the new music flautist from new york. she will be performing works by tampa based **bonk festival** composers and other works of historical importance

JARAK JAUH for piccolo/flute/alto flute and tape by nicholas brooke

this piece is inspired by the saluang tradition of west sumatra, in which two flutes play a single melody in close unison; subtle differences in each saluang's tuning and rhythm create a shimmering filigree. In jarak jauh, margaret plays against a recorded doppelganger of herself, which begins in distant canon. slowly, the flutes become one. sumatran saluangs also enter the mix, further blurring the distinction between live musician and recording. the piece is

influenced by the keening, chromatic tradition of some western sumatran music, in which the singer often bemoans the fact that one's "other half" is missing or distant. In the matrilineal culture of west sumatra, men tend to merantau, or travel far away in search of a livelihood, leaving the women to sing about their absence. "jarak jauh" means long distance. performed by **margaret lancaster**

SEEGERSONG #2 for solo flute by james tenney

james tenney's seegersong #2 for solo flute is a spatial exercise whose structure unfolds subtly and lyrically to trancelike effect. it was composed in 1999 for katrin zenz on the occasion of the birth of her daughter eleftheria. performed by **margaret lancaster**

IN PRAISE OF BUDDY HACKETT for flute and tape by paul reller

this piece is **written for and dedicated to margaret "the lung" lancaster**, the only human yet able to play it, for both physical and aesthetic reasons. even midi flutes tire. buddy hackett is an american actor and spiritual leader. the hindus believe that everyone is god. performed by **margaret lancaster**

THE NEW IMPROVED TRUTH, BOOK III for flute and tape by eric lyon

like everything else, the truth can always be improved upon. the current truth might not make good people look good enough or bad people look bad enough. the selection of just the right photograph to make someone look more presidential, or more menacing, adds that extra sparkle to the truths reported in our media. strategic cropping of images, darkening the complexion of a face, editing out distracting and non-essential civilian body counts; these are all necessary tools for portraying the higher truth. the pursuit of better and better truth is a universal historic process. whoever creates the best truth wins. can you handle the truth? performed by **margaret lancaster**

FLUXATION No 2 (1992) by russell frehling performed by gustavo matamoros

UNTITLED: ARTIFACTS / LONG LINES (2004) video by russell frehling

the soundtrack is part of a series called **untitled/artifacts**, which was started back around 1982 as a vehicle in which sound materials collected for installation projects could be developed in a live performance context. from the surrounding ambient noise extremely short segments, a few thousandths of a second long, are extracted and looped in such a way as to render them essentially static; the way that a photograph has the ability to freeze a subject in motion.

these "frozen" waveforms (these days often referred to as "grains") are cascaded over time to create a continuously evolving sound. this technique is a way of deconstructing the ambient soundscape into its elemental components and reconstructing a new sonic encounter. regarding **longlines** the video - as with most of my work i tend to deal with the mundane stuff of my day to day world. this video is shot on my commute route to new york city via amtrack/subway. i used extremely high shutter speeds to capture the details of structures that are normally a blur.

AIR FOR FUJARA AND ELECTRONICS (2006) by juraj kojs

air is a composition scored for the physical and virtual fujaras. the composition presents a communication between the ancient bass pipe instrument and its digitally modeled replica. the virtual fujara designed by **stefania serafin** extends the frequency range, amplitude envelope contour and duration, and timbre of the physical instrument. the model further facilitates circular breathing, an effect that is impossible to achieve by the physical fujara. the composition elaborates on breathing and overblowing patterns of various durations, shapes, and intensities. pitch material of 'air' is derived from the slovak folk music. formally, the composition follows the trajectory from the idiomatic sound of the physical fujara to the sounds produced by extended performance techniques, and, finally, to the sonorities of the physical model.

ALL FORGOTTEN FOR PIANO AND ELECTRONICS (2006) by juraj kojs

all forgotten belongs to a series of pieces inspired by poetry of **st. john of cross**. these compositions explore instrumental sonorities that lie on the border of hearing. the piano part is executed inside the instrument while bowing the strings with the fingers. the electronic part uses the "max/msp" implementation of the marimba physical model designed by **stefania serafin**. extending the instruments, possibilities beyond the limitations of the physical world, the virtual marimbas enable production of high and low tones not performable on the physical instrument, sustained excitation of the tones, tone repetition as fast as 1 event per 1 millisecond, real-time change of the beater qualities, and extremely rapid repositioning of the beater on the bar. while straining both physical and virtual instruments, 'all forgotten' releases suppressed beauty hidden in the tensed piano strings and dense marimba bars.

OPEN PIANO by juan carlos espinosa

EREBUS (2007) by juan carlos espinosa

HAL 9000 video by shaun vendryes

RESKINTHESIS by armando martinez

is an excursion into the world of percussive surfaces. the prevalent skins used for hand drums throughout time, namely goat, cattle, elk and buffalo are recorded into resynthesis software and morphed with raw waveforms to produce new exotic surfaces. these new textures are then sequenced, cut-up and processed with computer software whilst maintaining true to the intent of early human rhythm and non-linear percussive ideas.

200 WATTS(1997-2007) by gustavo matamoros

one sealed envelop is handed to each member of the audience that must not be open until instructed to do so

20 TITLES (c. 1980)

plus performances of seminal experimental and avant-garde works that include:

VOICE by toru takemitsu

CELESTIAL MUSIC by tom johnson

SONIC MEDITATION by pauline oliveros

IONISATION by edgard verese

CRITICAL BAND by james tenney

MUSIC OF CHANGES by john cage

IN C by terry riley

THE KING OF DENMARK by morton feldman

and others as performed by stellar musicians and ensembles from across south florida



Thursday, 03/01/07

7 PM **HELENA BUGALLO**

helena bugallo performs the 90-minute long work **triadic memories** for solo piano by **morton feldman**

TRIADIC MEMORIES by morton feldman

"**morton feldman** completed **triadic memories** for solo piano on july 23, 1981. it is dedicated to the avant-garde pianists aki takahashi and rodger woodward, and is the composer's most famous piano work. consisting of over 1100 measures, it is also the longest. there is no designated tempo; performances and recordings can vary in duration from seventy to ninety minutes. only a few notes, generated from a sparse, two-bar musical cell, is the basis for all the ensuing material. this extreme economy does not betray a dry or deliberately challenging work. it is not especially demanding music, but rather it is inventive, beautiful, and never boring. one can only be amazed after listening to such an unprecedented achievement; most works of this length require the composer to fill it with as many diverse elements as possible in order to keep it interesting." ~ excerpt from review in All Music Guide

9:30 PM **JAN WILLIAMS**

percussionist **jan williams** performs an intermedia percussion concert featuring music by early fluxus composer **la monte young** and miami's **gustavo matamoros**

WILLIAMS TELLS OF RIGHTS (1997-2005) by gustavo matamoros

a song for snare drum written for jan williams. the sound text is built around the sound of the word “right” as used in the english language. when it appears, the word "right" is read aloud into a snare drum while the rest of the text is spoken softly. a long roll of the letter "r" is necessary to cause the snare drum to trill each time the word "right" is spoken

591 TO H.F. (1960) by la monte young

PICKUP STICKS (1998) by gustavo matamoros

a game of chinese pickup sticks is played over an amplified drum skin, its image also amplified several times its real size on a video screen. the task: try not to make a sound! in this snare drum piece it is the mistakes that release sonic "dreams & spirits" conceptually contained inside drum



Friday, 03/02/07

7 PM **FIU NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE**

chamber music by **earle brown, john cage, morton feldman and lou harrison**

FOLIO and 4 SYSTEMS VERSION 1 by earle brown

eliot rodriguez, clarinet; michael davis, viola; david mendoza, viola; edward shannon, viola; marta milosevic, piano; orlando jacinto garcia

4 INSTRUMENTS by morton feldman

rafael galvan-herrera, violin; roxana mendoza-guevara, cello; michael davis, viola; daniel venegas, piano; orlando jacinto garcia, conducting

PRIMITIVE for prepared piano by john cage

marta milosevic, piano

VARIED TRIO by lou harrison

rafael galvan-herrera, violin; daniel venegas, piano; zack eldridge, percussion

FOLIO and 4 SYSTEMS VERSION 2 by earle brown

eliot rodriguez, clarinet; michael davis, viola; david mendoza, viola; edward shannon, viola; marta milosevic, piano; orlando jacinto garcia, conducting

9:30 PM **INDETERMINACY TOO** john cage oral histories project

this oral histories project, constructed during the festival, will feature stories and anecdotes about john cage compiled from the numerous festival artists and attendees who knew him personally. this video and sound event is organized by the **interdisciplinary sound arts workshop** in collaboration with **laura kuhn**, director of the **john cage trust**, and **barron sharer** of **cinema vortex**

COMUNITY EVENTS

Saturday, 03/03/07

FLUX DAY

Those who will attend and participate in the many **FLUXUS DAY** activities on March 3 in Miami may come to understand why Fluxus has been simultaneously called both “high art” and “low art.” Fluxus is an oddly ambiguous Latin word which, for over 40 years now, has been applied to a celebrated group of composers, musicians, artists, writers, poets, dancers, and other art professionals who were pioneers in developing interdisciplinary art. The original Fluxus artists formed a pillar of 20th Century Art, and its hard-to-define principles are still being expounded upon by art historians and excited young artists

of today

11:00 AM - **FLUXUS ON THE BEACH**

events on lincoln road and out to sea in miami beach

2:30 PM - **FLUX FAIR**

events at carnival center's plaza of the arts in the main land

9:30 PM - **FLUX EVE**

a concert at carnival center's studio theater

Sunday, 03/04/07

10:00 AM to MIDNIGHT **erik satie's VEXATIONS**

at carnival center's knight concert hall

Saturday, 03/03/07 - FLUX DAY

11:00 AM - **FLUXUS ON THE BEACH**

FLUXUS ON THE BEACH

Fluxus has proven to be resilient and au curreant! This will be seen on Miami's Flux Day when New York Fluxus artists Alison Knowles and Larry Miller present **PIANO ODYSSEY (A Trojan Horse)**, an event specially created for Miami Beach starting at 11 AM at **800 Lincoln Road** and traveling in a straight line to the sands of Miami Beach's eastern shore. Knowles and Miller, along with Gustavo Matamoras and others will perform classic works from the Fluxus repertoire of piano compositions and will present other events along the way, creating a unique opportunity for viewers to participate in a sonorous Fluxus journey to the sea.

This event will be dedicated to the late Fluxus artist **Nam June Paik**, who was a long time Miami Beach resident along with his wife Shikego Kubota, an internationally celebrated Fluxus and video installation artist. For this occasion, a selection of works from George Maciunas's **12 COMPOSITIONS for NAM JUNE PAIK** (1962) will be performed during the "Odyssey" and the evening concert. A variation of Benjamin Patterson's **A VERY LAWFUL DANCE** (1962), and Eric Andersen's **OPUS 1054** (early 1960s), which requires the simultaneous precision of four

pianists, will be presented along the way.

On the beach, Knowles will premier her new work **SHORELINE**, using a sewing machine and assistants who will aid in building the work. Miller will conduct and perform other selected works; a highlight among them will be the rarely produced **88 NOTES** by Albert Fine in which an article of clothing is removed for each of the notes played.

The piano will have an important function at the beach site, in the finale of its journey. Arranged by Miller, the pianist, will play themes from Debussy's "La Mer", as Miller pays homage to Nam June Paik, (*Atlantis Pirate for Paik 2007*).

An additional element will provide challenges for all participants: Selected events from the legendary *FLUX SPORTS* will offer the public – including children of all ambulatory ages – to participate in out-of-the-ordinary sports diversions. These may include such unusual contests as **BLOW SOCCER** (in which long small tubes are used to propel a ping-pong ball by breath alone) or **BEACH BADMINTON**, using rackets with six-foot long handles. For those who bring bikes there will be a **SLOW BICYCLE RACE** (last one across the line wins). Couples can dance to Ben Vautier's **TANGO**. And finally, the most likely contended event of all will be the **ZEN DASH**. You must be there to get the instructions.

And, bridging the geographical gap between FLUXUS ON THE BEACH and FLUX FAIR (back in the main land), Miami will experience the premiere of **BAND MUSIC No 1** by gustavo matamoros, a moving piece involving the members of a marching band

Saturday, 03/03/07 - **FLUX DAY**

2:30 PM - **FLUX FAIR (DO THE BEST YOU CAN)**

back on the main land, at the **carnival center's** outdoor **plaza of the farts**, come enjoy part 2 of this fluxus day extravaganza and participate in the numerous fluxus activities and challenges rearranged by gustavo matamoros for participation by young and old. the different FLUX FAIR booths will include fluxus classics like:

OPERA INSTRUCTION (1961) by eric anderson

RAINBOW #1 FOR ORCHESTRA by ay-o

RAINBOW #2 FOR ORCHESTRA by ay-o

CHOISE 12 (1966) by robert bozzi

INCIDENTAL MUSIC No 2 (1961) by george brecht

INCIDENTAL MUSIC No 3 (1961) by george brecht

OCTET FOR WINDS (1964) by george brecht

SALE (1962) by ben vautier

AUDIENCE PIECE No 10 (1965) by ben vautier

WIND MUSIC No 2 (1966) by mieko shiomi

C/S TRACE (1963) by robert watts

MUSIC FOR PIANO NO. 5 (FLUX-VARIATION) by toshi ichiyanagi

...and more.

Saturday, 03/03/07 - **FLUX DAY**

9:30 PM - **FLUXUS EVE CONCERT**

join **alison knowles**, **larry miller** and a battery on miamians in a concert of classical fluxus pieces

during the **FLUXUS EVE** concert at the **carnival center's studio theater**, **alison knowles** and **larry miller** will perform some of their own compositions as well a diverse selection chosen from fluxus works by various artists such as eric andersen, ay-o, george brecht, philip corner, dick higgins, Toshi Ichiyanagi, joe jones, bengt af klintberg, takehisa kosugi, milan knizak, george maciunas, yoko ono, ben patterson, willem de ridder, takako saito, tomas Schmit, miieko shiomi, yasunao tone, ben vautier, yoshi wada, robert watts, and emmett williams. gustavo matamoros and a small group of musicians and performers will join the concert.

knowles and musicians will perform her work **ONION SKIN SONG** and with multiple readers, will conduct her classic **NEWSPAPER MUSIC**. miller will perform **REMOTE MUSIC (FOR KEYBOARD)** 1976, known for its minimalist fluxus style. a highlight of the evening will be the presentation of george brecht's **MOTOR VEHICLE SUNDOWN EVENT (for john cage)**, most recently directed by miller in front of the dom cathedral in cologne, germany in 2005. in that version there were over 40 vehicles, but the miami realization will have an unexpected approach to the piece.

as miller explains, "a fluxus concert is characterized by the willingness of artists to collaborate at the most creative essence, to carry that impulse through on behalf of a group intelligence, and to sense the original spirit shaped by the unique time and place in which the events takes place."



Sunday, 03/04/07 - 10 AM to MIDNIGHT

erik satie's VEXATIONS

lobby at carnival center's knight concert hall

this colossal piano performance gathers the energies of 30 pianists, both veteran icons of our community as well as young upcoming talents, and puts them to the test, each contributing 28-minute segment of the first miami performance of this 14-hour long piece. the list includes:

guests of honor: **ruth greenfield** and **velia yedra**

plus **dennis kam**, **adrian quesada**, **juraj kojs**, and more ...

10:00 AM pianist 1
10:28 AM pianist 2
10:56 AM pianist 3
11:24 AM pianist 4
11:52 AM pianist 5
12:20 PM pianist 6
12:48 PM pianist 7
01:16 PM pianist 8
01:44 PM pianist 9
02:12 PM pianist 10
02:40 PM pianist 11
03:08 PM pianist 12
03:36 PM pianist 13
04:04 PM pianist 14
04:32 PM pianist 15
05:00 PM pianist 16
05:28 PM pianist 17
05:56 PM pianist 18
06:24 PM pianist 19
06:52 PM pianist 20
07:20 PM pianist 21
07:48 PM pianist 22
08:16 PM pianist 23
08:44 PM pianist 24
09:12 PM pianist 25
09:40 PM pianist 26
10:08 PM pianist 27
10:36 PM pianist 28
11:04 PM pianist 29
11:32 PM pianist 30
12:00 AM

INSTALLATIONS



February 23 - March 4, 2007 - EXHIBITION

CAGE: RELEASED IN MIAMI

an intermedia installation comprised of materials from iSAW's Experimental Sound Archive, in collaboration with the Louis Wolfson II - Florida Moving Image Archive and Deluxe Arts.

OPENING RECEPTION:

Friday, February 23, 2007 - 6-9 PM

Deluxe Arts

2051 NW 2 Avenue, Miami
305 858 7735

www.subtropics.org

Dave Holland Review

Ned Mudd

July 31, 2005

Santa Fe , New Mexico

Dave Holland Quintet at the Lensic Theater

The band breaks out of the intro and hands it to Chris Potter saxophone man who shakes the House with 15,000 notes per hour squealing to the rafters, backbeat pile-driving honks aeronautic flow, sucking the air out of the room then passes to Robin Eubanks and his big brass trombone that doubles as a subsonic cannon, air pouring from the fuselage, a flock of geese in heat, trombone man's lips pressed hard into the metal, spray exploding around his head like a shimmering halo, the world reflected in the horn's bell - stars, galaxies, a universe of pure tone.....

Steve Nelson jumps the vibraphone like an electric skeleton 2 sticks in each hand slashing against the grain, chords of fire, leaning into the beat, head wagging, lips peeled, beating the bones, ribs shaking, a run up the keys then back too fast to follow with mortal eyes.....

Dave Holland holds the band down double clutching low E, takes the solo and lets it rip, chopping notes into small fragments, flying up the neck ten fingers hopping the strings like a spider with a fly in the net, smooth as polished wood, thumping for glory and makes a handoff to Nate Smith tom-tom hero thrashing the cymbals

so hard a stick breaks, chunk flies across the stage where Eubanks finds it, holds it up for skin beater's big grin, great crescendo, skin beater's feet shining in the stage lights, the band watching, audience rapt, nowhere to move

Whap! comes down on loose high hat, cuts to pure funk with Holland straddling the riff against the marauding thunder, skin beater tearing it up..... Whap! the band jumps in as one, *All is One*, back to the head, horn men blurting separate parts, thirds fifths unison.... pulsating the long note, vibes pushing the wave, deep bass holding, holding, as the fusion melds and the tune slides onto the runway like a big jet easing in

for a smooth landing on fat rubber tires and stops at the gate into a moment of pure silence

which brings the House down hard.....

Two hours of jazz and there's a fire in the House, crowd leaps to its feet and slams the walls with a roar as the band smiles victorious and says "good night" but the House has other ideas and demands *More* in pulsing insistence which brings the Dave Holland Quintet back onstage for one last tune, the piece de resistance..... then it's over and folks drift off into the night with sounds of Eternity roaring in their heads,
the collective bargain of music achieved in a small theater on a warm summer night at the edge
of the high desert in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Ned Mudd

Front row, seat 110

In Memoriam

of HUGH DAVIES 1943-2005

LaDonna Smith

The Improvisor pays respects for the recent loss of the great English electronic musician/instrument builder/scholar and innovator **HUGH DAVIES** (1943-2005).

From David Toop:

"Sad [news](#): Hugh Davies died on the 1st January, 2005. Born in 1943, Hugh was a pioneer of live electronic music, an inventor of musical instruments, a composer, educator, and renowned researcher into the history of electronic music. An assistant to Karlheinz Stockhausen from 1964 to 1966, he participated in the recording of Stockhausen's Mikrophonie I in 1965. Other recordings included wonderful LPs by Music Improvisation Company (with Derek Bailey and Evan Parker) and Gentle Fire, and his solo albums for FMP and Grob. Anybody involved in live electronics, electronic improvisation, hardware hacking, or, come to that, anybody who needs a table in order to be able to perform, owes a debt to Hugh. He will be sadly missed."

Hugh is also heard on a recording session with the USA group BORBETOMAGUS. There's much to be explored from what he left us.
You can find the works of Hugh Davies at

<http://www.steim.org/steim/news.php>

<http://www.arts-electric.org/friends/>

<http://www.churchofgrob.com/Churchofgrob/CATALOG/Grob324/grob324.html>

LS

HIGH ZERO

FESTIVAL

Baltimore

Sept. 23-25, 2005

LaDonna
Smith

Where is a community that prides itself on guerilla improvisation in the streets?

..the group sport of free improvisation? .. is the circuit bending capital of the USA? ...promotes workshops, feasts,

& new collaborations which emphasize selfless camaraderie in musical abstraction and mutual invention?

Baltimore, Maryland's **HIGH ZERO !** It's a community effort, from the organizing collective, to participation of

selected international and local improvisors, playing together for the first time, to devoted attendees returning for more,

more, more. A refreshing change from the usual jaded audiences that dot the U.S. landscape for this music.

Imagine a test-tube, magnified by silence, stirred by sound of water dripping, subtle space transitions to distanced

kalimba, sound source, suddenly pours, oscillates, and becomes a looming flood, sudden rush of power, the mighty water,

gushing relentlessly, in a full range of ever changing presence. Inner music inside the the violence of constancy, filtered color

changes in controlled distortion. The inventor, **Melissa Moore**, creator of a laboratory of controlled noise

& sound, brings together the image of wind & rain, electricity in miniscule evolutionary process becoming universes of

elemental energy. I felt as if I were kayaking over relentless class 5 rapids *and enjoying the ride*. Wind tunnels of faint

voices, power of nature, natural disaster, and in this case, the Creator was a black woman...

Then came the rains... I was lulled into deep relaxation by it all, the sound assault became sedative.

Could've slept like a baby for the rest of the night, but there was more to come. . .

Set One, Thursday, Sept 22, 2005:

Joseph Hammer (LA) -electric tape loop, Audrey Chen (B) voice/cello Carly Ptak (B) mind

Tentatively opening with looped tape, distant conversations grooved by hand, punctuated sharply with the sound of falling metal, and outright screams. Chen worked to build a musical continuity from the seeming disparate elements, adding pulse, rubbing and deep oceanic tones from her cello as, for me, the high point most definitely her adept use of voice, soundings, and guttural tonal explosions, full range of utterance before Ptak's interjects loudly, "What can we do that isn't fascinating right now?" In the second piece, Ptak picks up a violin and commences a tease before engaging in an uncomfortably shrill scrape of hair to steel string. Chen's cello tone by contrast, altered, but full bodied and articulate. Hammer eeks some magnetic head to complement. Very interesting movement goes by as Chen provides the grace, technique elegance and flair expected from a stringed instrument against the more alleatoric rhythm attacks of her partners. Ptak edging on the side of subtle threat and danger, Hammer engrosses himself in the abstraction of manipulated backdrops as Chen commences assaultive bow striking, hair-shredding her way center stage, creating a climactic beauty in the percussive shape of the movement. She silences herself, allowing the texture to emerge before adding the vocal icing on the mix, the expression that comes through heart and soul and human voice, gently riding the wave of

bizarre accompaniments introduced by Hammer & Ptak, concluding with Ptak on the edge of an entrance that didn't arrive.

Set Three, Thursday, Sept 22, 2005:

**Peter Jacquemyn (Belgium) double bass, Claire Elizabeth Barratt (NYC) dance,
Rose Hammer (Baltimore) baritone sax, Birgit Ulher (Germany) trumpet**

This group takes no time at all to get to the heart of the music as Claire Barratt engages the audience visually with the elegance of gestures, postures and poses. Peter Jacquemyn's large powerful sound is balanced by the clarity of the baritone saxophone emerging from low responsive tones to a standing dialog. Ulhuer adds textures, split sound, spit and potential for 100 mutable voices which also double as percussive accents. Jacquemyn driving the shape of the piece, settling into low chanting and throat singing. The voice of the bass overwhelmingly clear and beautiful. Rose complements and balances on the large baritone saxophone, matching pitch for pitch in the fervent cries of the wildness, and the metals bowed beer cans and pie tins, muted plastic bags on the double bass, created new settings for the music, reminiscent of Jazz, or the Zoo with the understated growls of Ulher. This grouping displayed an awesome balance throughout, in virtuosity from the one legged maneuverings of Clair Barratt to the shape of the music itself.

Set Four, Thursday, Sept 22, 2005:

**Mike Muniak (Baltimore) electronics/laptop, Paul Niedhardt (Baltimore) drums,
Bonnie Jones (Baltimore) digital delay pedal, Caleb Johnson (Baltimore) electronics,
Tatsuya Nakatani (NY) drums**

The blend of three electronicians with two drummers equated large sound structures nearly impossible to pick out the individual electronic elements, but Jones whirling feedback set a new event in motion. From active, busy cymbal-bending and drones of vibrators of Nakatani contrasted by Niedhardt's accented punctuations and tactile attacks to observing Bonnie Jones in the image of a dentist with tools, in deep concentration, computer driven sonic events, a metamorphosis of layered energies, rising to crescendo.

FRIDAY NIGHT , September 23rd:

8:30 p.m. Scott Moore (Brooklyn, NY) Solo

Large man with slapsticks and jingles moves around in concert with a strange found apparatus, droning blower with airbag. A shamanistic circling, ritual, inference, medicine man. As the rhythm rises to an ear-splitting fever pitch, the air bag gradually rises, and is full.

Set One: John Berndt (Baltimore) soprano saxophone

Jay Kishor (Baltimore) surbahar sitar, Tatsuya Nakani (NY) percussion

Opening with a long tone on the saxophone with percussive rhythmic splash, the drone is introduced only briefly by the subarhar sitar before bent tones pause, isolated, slowly build to rising melodic substance. Bowed gong and scraping snare contrasts the jazz tones produced by the sitar, very unlike any previous exposure to raga. Definite melding of styles and traditions, as Nakatani strikes his modified trap in almost Taiko fashion, Berndt circular breathes into his instrument, controlling tone with a pedal. The music is truly transcendent, a blend of free jazz and trance, rising and resolving the boundaries. Nakatani driving madly virtuosic drumming front and center at times raising with Berndt to intense free jazz proportions, the surbahar melting at times into hints of contemporary jazz guitar incarnations, a blending of East and West. Raga? NOT.

Set Two: 9:45 p.m. Audrey Chen (Baltimore) cello/voice,

Bonnie Jones (Baltimore) digital delay pedal,

Mazen Kerbaj (Lebanon) trumpet & mutes & tubes

C. Spencer Yeh (Cincinnati) violin/voice

Opening ever so quietly, Mazen Kerbaj, master of extended trumpet techniques, utters contrabass tones via his surrealistic long tubing. Spacious elapse of quietude revealing extraordinary and understated utterings from the lips of C. Spencer Yeh with eery open mouthed suggestions of Chen. Kerbaj slowly works his preparations, turning his trumpet into a factory of subtle vibrations & beautiful tiny belltones. A soft blending of percussion and breath. The sound of raw scratch electricity is heard as Bonnie Jones blends this dimension into the ensemble, completing the palette of sound. Often white noise was common, not from the circuit bending, but from the teeth and breath, lips & bow of Chen, or Yeh, adeptly imitated by the reed mouthpiece of Kerbaj's trumpet. contraption, blending and blurring the lines. Abstraction and events of miniscule proportion give rise to an active sound exploration of stunning originality and delicacy. Butterfly flutterings align with the movement of silence and unorthodox renderings, a watchful ear is in order here. Sublime.

Solo: Phil Minton, voice, facial, diaphragm & hands, 10:30 p.m.

The full bodied wine of tone deconstructed into every conceivable molecular partial imaginable in multiple extremities of range and human emotion, expression from the inside out.

Set Three: 10:55 p.m. Samuel Burt- (Baltimore) clarinet, voice, laptop
Andy Hayleck (Baltimore) bowed metal electronics
Liz Tonne (Boston) voice
Birgit Ulher (Hamburg, Germany) trumpet

Lots of space for the sound event, waiting for the next, an utterly unique & ubiquitous vocal ubiety, the abstract quality of being in position, first noticeable element in this ensemble, vocalese expressive sweetness, crystalline isolated sound tones, high sonics supersized and subtle. From the stearin sonics of Burt's clarinet and Hayleck's saw to ultra-sonic growlings of Ulher's trumpet below the low range of her horn, Tonne exposes gems of rare sound jewelry in her truly sonoroic stratospheric frequencies, as precious as moments in life's articulating, refrain the durations.

What means High Zero? Clarinetist Samuel Burt sits Zen and Waits.
The sound is burning at *ppp* and constaint. Quietude contained and surrounded by breath.
Speaking so softly, saying so much.

SATURDAY September 24th found a comprehensive collective collaboration, awakening participants at different times of day, from a much **too early in the morning workshop** at *Baltimore's Cultural Alliance*, where a rude & "care-less" gallery manager subordinated what could have been in the main gallery, a dance & music meditation of public interest, to an inappropriate "breakroom", with hard & dusty concrete floor, T.V. & flea-market furniture to be moved around to accommodate the dismayed & unwanted performance artists, not to mention dancers! Clearly, his interest was in not disturbing the half dozen or so gallery guests, who in fact might have found us interesting in the main gallery. This gave rise to resigned frustration, albeit transformed by **Claire Barratt's** slimly attended but beautiful movement meditation, & the final abortion of the participants to a short presentation in a nearby park.

A much more congenial scene, think coffee & bagels, at **The Theater Project**, where musicians gathered, communicated, & participated in Phil Minton's Herculean Voice Workshop, all before an afternoon of new collaborative experiences between participants, who are all getting to know each other in the moment of their artistic assignments. Later in the day, a "string" thing was to happen in front of the Railroad Station. Three of us showed up, but it was an inappropriate setting for violinists to mimic "playing" as cars drove around....

But guerilla art is very much a part of the HIGH ZERO FESTIVAL, for better or worse, and indeed some things work out better. We had to abort a late Saturday afternoon excursion into a neighborhood, where participants spread out a mile long, and "performed" activities, musical and otherwise, for garage doors in an alley, when someone called the Police and a bottle was thrown. We aborted to a nearby park, much more appropriately creating a quadraphonic sound environment, enjoying fresh air and pending rain droplets, cooling the heavy humidity in the air, and delighting dog owners and animals.

Many other guerilla appearances had previously occurred during the week before the festival, as well as late nights after shows, and all throughout the weekend...these were witnessed by passerby's and collaborators, a signature of High Zero impact in the neighboring local, unsuspecting, and random eve's droppers.

Saturday afternoon shows began in the Theater at 1:00, with **Found Photographs**, "**Memories of the Anonymous**,"

a large ensemble accompanying a slide show of found photographs, **Improvisation Minus Music**, an unstructured

theatrical improvisation incorporating selected victims from the festival artistic pool, and **Phil Minton's Ferril Orchestra**,

the dozen or so vocal volunteers, who sang as Minton conducted an event of operatic, sonic, and extraordinary choral soundings.

SATURDAY EVENING Sept. 25th,

Solo: Tatsuya Nakatani (Easton, Pennsylvania) percussion 8:30 p.m.

Opening bowed gong, many frequencies and sub-frequencies with the heart beat of the bass drum gradually strengthening to a dramatic rumble, "ups the ante" with metallic reverberations transforming to an acoustic feedback, then a release.

Rubbing and bending metal on metal, rearranging the plates and sheets of cymbals on drumhead.

Cosmic & celestial

tonalities ring sublimely over the distant rumbling growing ever present. Nakatani is an adept sound manipulator of bells, plates of steel, bowls & ritual bells, transforming toning, scraping, and bursts of explosive energy: each event it's own statement,

or comment. The voices are many, monstrous, and primal. Singing metals over the pulse of living in the now. A truly

great improviser & percussionist, Nakatani, whose left foot on bass drum transformed rhythmic hypnotic rumbling to barely audible, a long riveting speeding vibrational decrescendo, finally arriving into silence.

Set One: Claire Barratt (Bronx, NY) dance

Liz Tonne (Boston) voice, Bonnie Jones (Baltimore) digital delay pedal

Paul Neidhardt (Baltimore) percussion & drums

Rising from a single thread of sound, minute vocal inflections sounding from Liz in her signature faux electro-microstructures, set in the midst of the crackle of Jones precision with random circuitry manipulation and Neidhardts restraint, Claire Barratt balances her static postures in a stunning red gown delivering intentional change in a manner stark and mechanical, imaging the microstructures of electrical flow in human movement. The phenomenon of this group's influence of the electrical charge that permeates life is so beautifully demonstrated here, magnetizing the audience to a noticeable potent silence. Niedhardt's unorthodox and inventive drumming habits break the tension, yet build its charge aiming towards a higher frequency of events. His singing bass drum hovers like an airplane before the change of station recovers the mysterious fanning continuum. He rubs together two leg bones, oscillations of our ancestors, present with the constant static of universal debris, the tower of singing frog abruptly leaves the silence of a cave. Barratt never dances. Her presence is that of a witness without eyes. She is moved only by the *presence*, possessed in her own essential solitude. Jones doing a subliminal scientist chef hat on top of her head, reads the instructions from doors that are numbered from one to 7, dutifully performing the actions. An interlude of comic relief when the ensemble stops completely to reveal the remaining secrets. Returning to the physical plane, the woman in red bears newfound animation from her shoulder socket. The busy musicians briefly resume as matchsticks are broken and Jones concludes, "Nuclear Fucking Vision"...

Set Two: Audrey Chen (Baltimore) voice
Clare Cooper (Sydney, Australia) guzheng,
Phil Minton (London) voice
Scott Rosenberg (Los Angeles) reeds

Popping and clicking, small sounds, guzheng and bowed harmonics, a texture that grows as vocalist, Phil Minton growls, rising to operatic pitch, soon matched by his female vocal counterpart in this set, Audrey Chen, who emits the clear lingering high blending with the bowed strings of Cooper's guzheng and high pitched supersonic sustains of Rosenberg's mouthpiece. He dismantles a contrabass clarinet, manipulating the gooseneck as Chen and Minton's horrific utterances take on consonatic spitting, slobbering proportion, mirroring each others jibberish and contrasting highs and lows. Rosenberg's unorthodox playing of the partials of his horn, relentlessly prevailed throughout,

finally driving the group to climax. Cooper flutters nimble fingers inducing a static popping, reminiscent of the circuit bending static of Jones, highlighted by a "surprise" solo in the mid interval of the set, a brief exception as mostly she served to support or frame the content of the singers. All four performers become possessed and consumed in deep utterances, stored cries from emotions buried so deep, that I wonder if previous lifetime experiences are not being emitted from the passages. From miniscule utterances, to vast otherworldly punctuations of organic murmurings, emersion in the extremes of the human expression, framed by invention.

Set Three: Che Davis, (Baltimore) trombone, didgeridoo & conch
Peter Jaquemyn (Belgium) double bass
LaDonna Smith (Alabama) violin
C. Spencer Yeh (Cincinnati) voice, violin

As I was a participant in this set, and largely due to the channeling in the moment, don't remember what happened, and leave it to anyone who witnessed this set to "write in" a report to us. Most of what I can recall is marked by the setting of a drone by Che Davis, from which textural and melodic forays transcend time altogether in a liquid passage of entrainment.

Set Four: Rose Hammer (Baltimore) baritone sax
Mazen Kerbaz (Beirut, Lebanon) trumpet, extended techniques
Melissa Moore (Baltimore) clarinet, electro-acoustic inventions
Scott Moore (Brooklyn, NY) Tuba, invented sculptural instrument

Think baritone sax, muted with a toboggan, giant man with long sticks and sousaphone, testubes, circuitry and kalimba, plus an inventor's trumpet complete with percussive mutes, hoses, and balloon maneuvers, experimental instruments of the first degree. Mazen Kerbaz, clearly a master of a plethora of augmentations and diminutions of surreal and outrageous permutations from assorted mutes, tubing, mouthpieces, and other air passage circuitry, always on the edge of the impossible and ridiculous, yet adeptly integral to the vitality and subtlety of the music, all while circular breathing, and holding a sacred space for musical virtuosity, both unimaginable technique & devout absurdist spirituality. Air matters accompanied by Moore's signature dripping water. Hammer raises the heat, eeking out astonishing high pitched multiphonics midpoint in the accompaniment, while the constant collaborative blurting from the sousaphone becomes a visual and aural reminder of Om-PaPa, Patriarch of tubing.

Once again the evening of performance concluded about 12:30 around midnight, and everyone was directed to an after the show stopping party and dance at a loft, and went on to the wee hours of the morning..

Sunday September 25th

Early to rise on Sunday, many of us once again engaged in more than one extended recording session during the day, occupying the most of our time, finally rewarded with a famous Baltimore "crab chow-down" dinner social, contact exchanging, eating and drinking, and as if there weren't enough music to go around, a contingency left to checkout an unrelated performance of Peter Brotzman across town as others engaged in more guerilla performance in the park before sundown, all before returning for another full Sunday evening show of yet a Rosie Heartline Solo set, and four full sets of musical collaboration, never before seen or heard.

I for one, was on the last leg of my considerable attention span, and when the final evening performance commenced, I realized that I had only enough energy left to sit halfway up in my chair. I was so "peopled-out" that I sought out a spot from the far-most corner up in the very back in the darkest part of the theater, to observe the remaining sets of the festival. Finding myself in the darkness of last seats in the theater, and blitzed from over-exposure, my beleaguered attempts at writing seemed to be really tired, lame, and going downhill fast. So, I found it appropriate and nessessary to just sit and enjoy the last evening of concerts without writing about them.

What I love about HIGH ZERO is the insistence on creating new contexts for collaborative improvisation. Embracing the careful choosing of collaborators, who have never worked together before, and posturing them in new combinations is a zone of comfort, that participants must be open to explore. In the exploration, audience and musicians alike witness for the first time the fruit of creating family, when strangers meet and create a new musical language in the course of creation. There is no competition, only the embracing of the sounding moment, being fully present and aware, blending new streams of reality into another, into each other, for the sheer presence of the moment of sounding.

Sunday evening, Sept 25th 8:30 p.m.

Solo Rosie Hertlein (NYC) violin, voice

- Set One** John Berndt (Baltimore) reeds, electronics
Samuel Burt (Baltimore) clarinet, voice, laptop
Che Davis (Baltimore) trombone, conch
Tom Goldstein (Baltimore) percussion
Scott Rosenberg (Los Angeles) reeds
- Set Two** Clare Cooper (Australia) guzheng
Joseph Hammer (Los Angeles) tape loops, electronics
Andy Hayleck (Baltimore) bowed metal, electronics
C. Spencer Yeh (Cincinnati) voice, violin
- Set Three** Che Davis (Baltimore) trombone, conch
Mazen Kerbaj (Lebanon) trumpet
Carly Ptak (Baltimore) mind
Scott Rosenberg (Los Angeles) reeds
Birgit Unlher (Germany) trumpet
- Set Four** Samuel Burt (Baltimore) clarinet, laptop electronics
Caleb Johnston (Baltimore) electronics
Phil Minton (London) voice
Scott Moore (Brooklyn, NY) tuba, invented instruments, voice

If anyone who attended HIGH ZERO would like to comment on, or review the above Sunday evening concert, you are invited to submit your text, and we'll be happy to include your report, or any subjective observations or commentary offered. Photos would also be appreciated.

My thanks and "Hats Off" to the directors, collective, and sponsors of HIGH ZERO, and for the enormous amount of dedication and commitment they have for this music, and my appreciation for the work that it takes to put on a festival of this scope and quality.. My hat was ceremonially burned by organizer John Berndt in the *"What happens when Improvisers don't make music?"* experimental theater on Saturday afternoon, smelling really bad, polluting the air, choking the singers in the Feral Choir, but hey, a mere example of the living exploration and the red passion of invention, *"Long live the music....! "*

~LaDonna Smith

FLASHPOINT / FLASH FORWARD

10th ANNUAL

DC INTERNATIONAL IMPROVISATION FESTIVAL

Anonymous

2004

What: Improvised music, dance and theatre

Flashpoint / Flash Forward brings together several of Washington, DC's most notable improvising dance, music, and theatre artists in a kick-off event to celebrate the upcoming 10th annual DC International Improvisation Festival, December 3 to 12, 2004.

So, what's so hot about improvisation, anyway? Isn't it the artist's job to figure out what they're trying to tell their audience and then practice or something? Not in this crowd. For many years, improvising artists have explored the possibilities of walking the tightrope that is spontaneous performance. No need to worry about your "inner critic" when you're on the hot-seat: no way to re-write something you just said, no way to change a wrong note you just played. All you can do is re-contextualize each choice in the next moment. Now try that in an ensemble. Now try that with a multi-disciplinary ensemble. Now we're onto something...

For the Flash Forward preview, artists will transcend genres and styles to create original, unscripted performance works. As usual, the unexpected is to be expected. Spontaneous Combustion features the athleticism of Wendell Cooper, the subtle and often humorous responses of Nicholette Routhier, and the wildly imaginative performance of Maida Withers to music performed by Anubodh on Bansuri (an Indian Bamboo Flute). Jane Franklin will perform her improv structure "Whisper" with live music and video. Ginger Wagg will dance an enchanting improv solo directed by the distinctively quirky Sharon Mansur. Mark Chalfant and

the Washington Improv Theater, will improvise scenes with live music. That's only the beginning. What else might happen is anyone's guess.

THERE WILL BE A PREVIEW of the Festival

When: Wednesday, October 20, 2004, 8pm
Cost: \$10

Who: MUSICANS: Jonathan Morris (guitar), Tom Bickley (recorder, voice, electronics), Anubodh (Bansuri); **DANCERS:** Spontaneous Combustion (Maida Withers, Nicholette Routhier, and Wendell Cooper), Jane Franklin, Jane Jerardi, and Sharon Mansur / mansurdance with Ginger Wagg; **THEATER:** Washington Improv Theater (WIT)

Mead Theatre Lab at Flashpoint
916 G Street, NW
Washington, DC
(Metro: Gallery Place)

For more information call: 202.315.1315 or visit
<http://www.improvfestival.com>

Musical Activism: An Open Call

By Marc Ribot

[from <http://www.squidsear.com>]

2004

On tour in Europe during the first twelve days of the recent invasion of Iraq, I witnessed something close to bereavement among audience members at the apparent consent of most Americans to Bush's agenda of war and empire.

It was exhausting, in addition with all the other pressures of performance, to deal with expectations to represent "America" in this situation. Although it felt strange to speak about the war during performances - I'm a guitarist, not a lecturer - it felt even stranger not to. The one thing about which I felt certain was that the incredible level of anger and opposition I witnessed was no longer simply about one lousy political decision, but had become a critique of the legitimacy of the power of empire, and it wasn't going to stop when the war ended.

Indeed, it hasn't. It remains nearly impossible to get on stage without addressing (or failing to address) the context within which, whether we like it or not, our music is now heard.

This database project described below was conceived as a means through which artists and musicians will be able to say what needs to be said politically in the formats where it will do the most good, to help to change a political context which, simply put, has become intolerable.

We're inviting touring artists to participate in a pilot project version to be launched around February 1, 2004. Anyone can back out at any time, but expressions of interest/commitment (along with brief bios if possible) are needed to apply for grants to build the database.

Best regards, Marc Ribot Musicians Solidarity Database [correspondence may be sent to msolidarity@squidco.com]

WHAT: The Musicians Solidarity Database will connect internationally touring recording artists/musicians with anti-war and global justice organizations local to their touring dates.

The Database is an initiative of the Musicians Solidarity Network (MSN). Although open and useful to all artists regardless of origin or tour destination, the actual possibilities will probably reflect the current touring routes. The intent is for participating artists to be able to integrate whatever degree of activity on behalf peace/democracy/social justice organizations they feel able to commit to into their

regular tour itineraries with a minimum of effort, and for the organizations to benefit from cultural support.

HOW: Touring artists enter their upcoming tour schedules, tech needs, and other necessary info and preferences into the database. Major peace/ democracy/social justice organizations access the info and cross-reference the dates of their planned events with touring artists' availability. The organizations then send the musicians/artists a set of proposals (for example: to speak or perform at a demonstration). The artist accepts whichever proposals they choose, and forward their acceptance along with whatever time or tech specs apply back to the organizations. The organizations confirm the date.

Even if tour schedules are too tight to allow for an artist's participation in outside events, artists can arrange, through the data bank, to make merchandise/ literature table space available to organizations they support.

Great care will be taken to make the data-base user friendly to both artists and organizations.

WHY?: An enormous divide has opened in political understanding between the US and most of the rest of the world, particularly in Europe. Most touring artists and musicians are already well aware of this.

But artists who speak out against Bush's agenda of war and empire, particularly in the US, run the risk of alienating fans or even being subjected to radio and other forms of blacklisting.

In Europe, things are different, at least for the time being. Manu Chao's "Clandestino" was a hit because of, not in spite of, his close identification with the social forum movement. Whether this will always be true is difficult to say: the same forces that created Bush are also pushing Europe steadily rightward. But it's true now.

The database is a way to turn this political differential into a force for progressive change in the US, enable artists who want to be active to do so, provide organizations against war and for global justice with a constant stream of performing artist support, and build a global network of artists and activists.

It will help artists to limit the economic risks of activism by connecting them with activists and audiences who share their views.

For example, contact with non-US activists and anti-war audiences will enable US musical/cultural figures (and global cultural figures who wish to sell in the US market) to speak out. It's no accident the Dixie Chicks spoke out against the war while in Europe.

As more artists risk opinions outside the US mainstream, it will change the political math that has discouraged dissent by encouraging fans to question their mass-media enforced opinions. And contact between US audiences and European/international artists willing to speak out will help break the US

media censorship of the depth of world opposition to war and empire.

Of course, the issues affecting us all aren't confined to the US: the same political/economic forces that put Bush in power in the US are alive and well in Europe and elsewhere. The problems are global and gestures of solidarity from touring musicians are needed to keep the spirit of opposition global as well.

A secondary benefit of the database involves musicians and artists rights issues. There are some issues of interest from anti-war, cultural, and labor perspectives. For example, the role of the Clear Channel monopoly in censoring opposition to the war, blacklisting anti-war artists, and even organizing pro-war demonstrations in the US is both an anti-war issue, and an infringement on artists' freedom of expression.

SPECIFICATIONS Filters, both passive/automatic and active/human will ensure that participating orgs are major and respected, and that participating artists are at a sufficiently professional level to be of use to them.

- Access to the database will be strictly limited to approved organizations.
- Contact between artists and organizations will take place within a database 'mailbox' so that artists/managers run no risk of having personal/business email accounts flooded with requests.
- Whatever form of participation the artist chooses - be it a gig, a single song, or a brief statement - the database format will ensure that all necessary technical requirements and conditions are met, without extensive back and forth between artists, managers and organizations.
- Artists will have access to full information about events they are being invited to participate in and about the organizations asking them to participate.
- Artists' participation in the database will be confidential (although at this stage, we may need to list participating artists in grant applications) unless the artists themselves choose to make it public.

AIRPLAY 101

by Bryan Farrish

www.radio-media.com

2005

Adding Other Artists

No real label has just one artist, for this would be way too costly to keep putting all the marketing efforts into making just the one thing happen (when those same marketing efforts could be making several other things happen at the same time, with no more cost.) Radio promoters can easily handle five songs on one phone call; PR people can pitch three albums with one call; distro people can try to sell ten albums during a single lunch with a retail buyer. And, the folks on the other end of these marketing conversations expect this. Matter of fact, every record that has ever sold 250,000 units has gone through this system with many other records simultaneously... that's just how marketing and sales works... in any business, not just music.

So, if you are establishing your own label, at some point you must add other acts to your offerings. And our advice is to do it after a full year of promoting your own album first. This way, you will have made some headway at radio, press, and retail, and any new acts that you talk to (especially ones with a following) will take you much more seriously if you really did something with your own record first.

If it's all the same to you, we'd recommend adding three other acts at the same time, none with more than three members each, and with solo artists being preferred. Three new acts is preferred because you will probably lose one or two during the setup process, and you need to be left with at least one. Also, the

economies of scale come into play with four total acts, especially in touring (sharing a bus), retail meet-and-greets (one earlier, one later), performances (help in setup/takedown), distro agreements (four is a minimum many times), etc. Within a few months, you'll know who your priority act is, and you can structure your activities accordingly from there on.

Other areas of marketing require different approaches when handling multiple acts, but for radio, the best technique is to stagger your releases, going for adds at least a few weeks apart, but while still taking advantage of any multiple-project discounts you get from some radio promoters. Do be realistic, however, in that there is always one priority project. Everyone on your marketing team, including your radio promoters, needs to know who to push during those situations where they only have time to mention one act, and one act only.

Nothing is more impressive than having multiple acts from one label on a chart simultaneously. It really shows that you are not a one-off situation, and other people will have much more faith in doing business with you when this happens.

You should continue working your four acts (which includes yours) for another full year. It will take that full year for retail, clubs and the media to become familiar with your other three acts, just like it took a year for them to become familiar with you. Your own act, however, is now becoming a staple with them.

At the end of two years, whatever work you had been doing yourself will probably need to be handled by some hired help. And at this point you can be freed up to start looking for four more acts.

Bryan Farrish Radio Promotion is an independent radio airplay promotion company. 818-905-8038 www.radio-media.com. If you live in Los Angeles and want to be informed of any events, seminars or parties we do, email meet@radio-media.com and tell us what town you are in, and also put "Request" in the subject.

airplay-articles@radio-media.com

Review: mínim festival

(Centre Cívic Can Felipa, Barcelona. May 28-29, 2004)

Christopher Williams

Since I, an American, moved to Barcelona nine months ago, I've been searching for a Spanish or Catalan equivalent to the English "grassroots". Though my quest continues, it's becoming increasingly clear to me that the project is in vain: the word apparently has no place in the regional languages. After all, the "concept" is a part of daily life here, and as such, perhaps, needs no special articulation.

My notion of "grassroots" is a close relative of "DIY" (Do It Yourself), but it's somewhat more specific than the notion we might encounter via punk rock or the Home Repair Channel. DIY implies to me that the "D" is a necessary expression of the "Y", not simply its employment, the "I" being smudged by the heel of "Y"'s hand as "D" takes it from the page, all three letters becoming thusly present in execution or consumption. For example, when eating Serrano ham, one actually sticks a cleaver into the whole leg of a pig, leaving a fatty palimpsest for the next person to come along. (Contrary to the experience of horrified American tourists witnessing such a sculpture by the dozen in Barcelona bars and restaurants for the first time, many locals' eating experience is enhanced by this food-event.)

I propose that a grassroots endeavor is a social extension of this aesthetic. Such is IBA. These Improvisadors de Barcelona, the city's most active free-improvised music and dance entity, have since 1998 produced over 150 concerts, talks, collaborations, and other events pertaining to their practice, while also maintaining a house band with its own touring and recording schedule. The collective work of currently active members Ferran Fages, Ruth Barberán, and Alfredo Costa Monteiro figures directly in the artistic vision of the programming, but rarely in an exclusive way. Ideology is minimal, a way of getting from here to there, and music much; IBA's community is strong, holistic, and unpreoccupied by self-promotion. (Let's eat the ham!) They rarely attract more people to events than can be invited to a glass of wine and a bit of Barberán's earth-shattering *tortilla de patatas*, but they do provide a deep and much-needed current of creative-musical substance to Barcelona at large.

A recent instance of their activities, mínim, convened nine musicians from seven countries in five acts for two nights of concerts on May 28-29, 2004 at the Can Felipa Civic Center in the

barrio of Poble Nou. Though most of the music made this weekend tended toward granular sounds, sustained textures, and an embrace of silence (as is common enough), it was uncommonly diverse. A variegated landscape of interactive models, media, and aesthetic strategies was represented, happily and unpretentiously.

The trio of Wade Matthews (bass clarinet and laptop), Diego Chamy (percussion), and Leonel Kaplan (trumpet) opened the festival with its longest performance, at 55 minutes nearly twice the length of any other. Kaplan's low profile of vaguely pitched, cyclical spitty-noise; Matthews' subtly lyrical keyclicks, multiphonics, and drones; and Chamy's ritualistic percussion setup (a single bass drum laid flat atop a swivel that allowed him to spin the drum while applying pine cones, superballs, a jawharp, a handheld microtape recorder, and various brushes and cymbals to its head for minutes at a time) formed distinct voices which moved around each other nimbly, almost polyphonically. This tightness and internal energy provided a drive which belied the static nature of the group's material, creating explosive changes of perspective from otherwise unspectacular circumstances. A few noteworthy moments included the beginning, when while sandwiched between his quiet, seated companions Chamy dove into his gyrating drum like cold water, Matthews and Kaplan nailing the imaginary downbeat to the millisecond; and a typical but refined silence in the middle of the set which was broken by another crisply attacked drum drone as if to subsume the gesture into drama – but was revisited by Matthews' gentle repetitive computer chirps entering shortly thereafter.

Koberce/ Zaclony was the weekend's only explicitly multimedia act, a video and guitar/ "dictaphone"(?) duo from the Czech Republic. Suitably, they performed in a large room separate from the concert hall used for other groups; at center stage loomed a giant video screen (though only the lower left quadrant was used for projection), Vera Lukasova working with images on his computer in obscurity to the left, and Ivan Palacky seated visibly at a small table with mixer, lamp, prone guitar, and dictaphone across the stage from his partner. The video material itself was sharp and hypnotic: an aquarium of fish (first in color, then black and white) moving by variably perceptible shifts in speed, sometimes superimposed with other frames of fish. It created a fractured line of potentially great interest for an (improvising?) partner, but Palacky's elbow drones, repetitive body percussion, and familiar feedback were somewhat weak in this context. Jerks and turns of phrase in the video often corresponded literally to the music, putting the sound element in an uncomfortable foreground position that the physical and social arrangement could not support: the video commanded too much attention to be perceptible as an equal partner, yet Palacky, half-present as an active performer, appeared to bare the role of the leader much of the time. As a conventional soundtrack, the music might have succeeded, but the problem of the handcuffed, *unrealized* body – not maximally itself – remained throughout.

By contrast, the opening performance of the second night by David Stackenäs, a Swedish guitarist, was fully present, exploring a similar but more elaborated tabletop setup with ebows, handheld fans with various attachments, preparations of sticks and knives, and other Unidentified Found Objects. Their approaches to the unadorned steel-string acoustic guitar were graceful, executed with precise, musical pacing (no small feat considering the practical need at some points to control three or more gadgets humming along independently). The variety of sustained textures achieved – fans whirling behind, near, and at the nut and bridge; ebows along all parts of the strings, buzzing against frets and singing; simple rattling preparations of silverware and a guitar slide standing near the soundhole – required a theatrical technique of constantly moving and removing the setup. Wide quasi-tantric gestures thus emerged and disintegrated despite themselves. (Expert lighting by Oriol Blanch amplified this intimacy, as it did for all performances except Koberce/ Zaclony, who chose darkness for obvious practical reasons.) Unfortunately, when Stackenäs attempted more overt physical efforts, they came across as unthoughtful and out of context. His short foray into sawing the corner of the guitar top with a ridged, wooden Rhythm Stick, for example, seemed particularly crude and ill-prepared, though thankfully it was abandoned in favor of less blatant material before long.

Angharad Davies (violin) and Margarida García (electric contrabass) presented the least “polished” performance of the festival; the rawness was most welcome. That this was only their third musical meeting (and only second in public) contributed to an unstable, playful dynamic whose actors’ disparity was born out by their physical appearance onstage: Davies, a tall, stately, seated violinist with readied bow beside García, a small, demurely-dressed bassist who rarely raised her face while negotiating the alien-looking instrument leaned up against her. Unlike the two other multiple-person acts of the weekend, Davies and García were relatively unbuckled. However, their modesty and mutual patience charmed the distance: both proposed independent musical worlds, but provided ample room for each other and the audience. Davies worked primarily with sustained arco sounds (sometimes incorporating styrofoam and/ or clothespin preparations) and stuttering schmeared pizzicati, whereas García played mostly isolated percussive figures, tapping or briefly bowing her hotly amplified bass on its neck, body, pickups, and bridge, or pecking pointillistic bits on the strings. The musicians intersected in their use of silence, abundant but not obligatory, and amplification; the latter not only magnified ordinarily elusive details from both instruments, it also strengthened their physical, and thus formal, resonances amidst frequent pauses in the reverberant hall.

The weekend’s final performance was a true finale, loud (if sometimes only in spirit) and virtuosic, by the French soprano saxophonist Stephane Rives, who managed the rarity of combining an introverted, serene, even fragile musical sensibility with totally playing the shit out of his horn. His three-section solo was the only act of the festival to stray from the one-piece model. Each section was circular-breathed from beginning to end and involved a different, highly restricted set of sound objects; the first, a relentless, blistering altissimo squeal with microtonal alterations, was worth the price of admission alone. With the bell of the saxophone closed on the

back of his calf, Rives coaxed acoustical interferences and guttural noises beneath a high drone which bounced around the room like a psychedelic light show. The second bit required him to change position, occasionally removing the instrument from his leg, and used little pitch. Instead Rives threw around mostly quiet, morphing wind sounds and percussion, which created a curious mediant between the first piece – of which we wouldn't have suspected any particular "large-scale" formal significance (while instead immersed in the microparticles of the sounds) – and the third. This last section, which followed a slug of water after the second, was played entirely with the horn aimed at the far corner of the hall and with said mouthful of water. It returned to the compressed melodic strategy of the first movement, and given completion of the instrument's physical movement from floor to ceiling over the course of the three sections, two distinct, simultaneous structures thus emerged: one, the cycle, two, the line. In itself, this would not have been remarkable, of course, but the sudden appearance of familiar favorites, superimposed no less, sat poignantly at the end of the festival.

And like the festival itself, it benefited from this familiarity. Its sensitivity to a restricted context was clear, and its response of maximal "Y"ness left a delicious consequence of, at least for your author, a provocation to more and maximal "D".

CLASSICAL MUSICIAN WANTED

Compiled by Carson Arnold

The following are the selected letters I recovered from San Francisco musician Jason Floyce during two weeks in 2003. They began shortly after he posted this once upon a time:

"Hardcore, experimental cellist breaking away, seeking musician to write original classical compositions. Must be reminiscent to the Baroque period or late 19th century passion. I have performed in various San Fransisco improvisation groups, including Tihs-llub, and selected European trios, and wish to completely retrace the roots of what is considered "contemporary music". Player should be motivated and partially skilled in the field-- but most so, able to write from a heart's passion. If interested, please write for auditions. -- Jason Floyce"

jason,

hi, man. saw you perform once in Frisco at an improv venue in someone's loft. you might've been with Tihs-llub, but I'm not certain, you were doing stuff with the cello; turning it upside a playing with your teeth. a real trip. somebody was next to you doing something with a turntable. i was visiting a buddy of mine out in Berkeley and was digging around listening to a lot of Matt Sperry's compositions and reading Bart Hopkin's mag, which influenced me to start making my own instruments. i call it the "limbikal". I cut branches off trees-- 10 feet long or more-- and arrange them as a xylophone across the forest floor. i spend ten hours a day out there, man. your gig meant a lot to me. so when i saw your notice advertised, it really confused me. i can't figure out. your music was so strong. i thought Tihs-llub was a way of getting people involved. whatever. peace.

-brian

Dear Brian,

Thanks for getting back. I too grow nostalgic for those days in the lofts and galleries, bouncing around with sheets of sound, cutting guitar strings with pliers for half an hour. Zip-zap! And may Matt Sperry rest in peace-- his scores were an important force. You might consider checking out an avant-garde artist in Brooklyn named Scott Rosenberg. His orchestral scores are the strongest, even distinct to Stockhausen's middle works with tone clustering. In regards to your confusion with my

abrupt transition, I recommend you come to the auditions. Beauty needs to be shed in this day and age. I spent fifteen years devouring the instrument with little acknowledgement to the scale, discipline, or patience. In fact, I barely knew anything about the cello for years, and to go further, couldn't identify a Beethoven symphony worth a damn. Not that this matters, but over time, I began to only hear noise, not music. Hope that answers anything.

*Be well,
Jason*

Jason,

I found your piece in the classified section of the paper this morning and am incredibly insulted to hear you've quit Tihs-Ilub. What sort of person stops the "improvisational search" (to quote you) to indulge in 19th century fartsy flowering besides a melodramatic waste-of-time??? I quit Julliard to avoid that crap! My name's Meegan, but don't bother to write back, I'll be burning cellos.

Dear Meegan,

I regret you have my home address. But of course, I'll respond! Your letter is yet another example of the the obtuse structure I experienced while on the "improvisational search", of which you referred to. A little background. That comment was made when I was quite young and foolish, while dogging out of various punk bands in the D.C. area (I later moved to Frisco because the experimental scene was really growing and the New York outlets were all clogged up with amateurs...not that I wasn't). Mostly leftovers of what Fugazi had already started in the eighties, but instead of being sober and crafty like them, we were a bunch of drunken misfits attempting to play our instruments with not a solitary clue how to shape the main chords. The concerts we gave in basements were just a polyphony of fuzz reverb, that for some reason, people dug-- maybe because they could do the same thing I was performing. I knew nothing of classical foundations, nor anything before Arnold Schoenberg, but even he was too prolific. Cage, Coltrane, Sun Ra-- those were the icons, and really, that mostly stemmed out of any interview Sonic Youth would give. So, the "improvisational search", really, could've been quoted by and number of us. It's just that I was recognized right after receiving my grant (and may I add, while taking lessons at night). Your projection to 19th Century sound? Ralph Vaughn Williams was an honest man, and appreciated people who lived outside their work. Any need to change my locks?

*Sincerely,
Jason*

Dear Jason,

Knowing nothing of Tihs-Ilub, I was immediately attracted to the controversy surrounding your recent departure from the improv genre. I'm an editor for an online zine called Marvel Sounds and was wondering if we could persuade you to contribute a few words to why you chose your decision and what's to hope for within the hardcore experimental field. Sound good?

Ben Hamill
Editor in-chief

Hi Ben,

Well, a few years ago I was in the middle of a space-folk festival back east, illuminating a new interpretation of The Incredible String Band and psych howling. I was visiting a friend who owned a lot of Vermont gongs, and the plan was: to choose a backwood neighborhood, go into their homes, and play whatever was in each person's kitchen without any prior notice we were coming. It never happened, and we would probably be looked upon as a royal pain to the natives. Besides, word had it, fiddler Dudley Laufman had already been doing this in New Hampshire annually with The Ride. During the middle of the concert, it occurred to me what I and many were creating was basically a tunnel that only "artists" could identify with. I wanted humans, which is basically what my earlier punk years were socially about, but for some reason floundered into more conceptual patterns. Walking back to my car after the show, I realized it was now probably easier for someone to perform fluxus scratching on a turntable with a needle and a tin can than any street musician standing outside freezing. Take John Zorn's Tzadik label-- anybody could record an hour's worth of pencils falling on the floor and still there would be an audience scooping the buck up. It's not that I no longer understood it, there was nothing to really understand. Some might accuse me of being aesthetically deranged, but to me, great improv always extended from an exploration of one's own persona transcended through music. Jazz and classical was the essence of this. It shouldn't be an excuse to play around. Or be weird. Or dysfunctional, which is what I began to observe as computers took shape in the late nineties. And as a quick thought (looking at that band Krackhouse) I'm not sure how smooth contemporary music will age seeing it rarely expresses its motive, never mind rhythm. Anyway, there are indeed unique parties of this territory. Phillip Glass has become pleasantly redundant, whereas Steve Reich continues to invent his own new scale and clef. Like I said, the Bay area scene is on quite a rampage, and you can still locate some generous acts who are creating sound of some substance. A lot of interesting folk music is coming out who can bind emotions with obscurity-- a group in Rhode Island, Fern Knight. I received a promo from this band in Maine called Cerberus Shoal, and they're a harbor of instruments, mingling the avant-garde with thousands of other styles. I wouldn't mind playing with them. Still, are they accessible? Who knows. And how many people care?

Hello Jason,

I am a professional violinist on the verge of retirement and have played in numerous quartets and trios throughout the country. I am highly interested in working with you upon the basis you described. My performance of Bartok has been pronounced as "immaculate". A resume is attached below. Hope to hear from you.

**Yours,
Phil Morris**

Dear Phil,

Your resume is quite impressive and very opposite of mine. My father actually was a violist at weddings, so {I} have some affinity in the genre. Like mood-music, the culture of wedding atmosphere has always fascinated me, although this probably comes from more a cult perspective rather than professionally! Elgar's opuses are indeed beautiful breezes (always loved his "In Moonlight") and I'm sure you perform them well. Unfortunately, I'm currently expecting an answer from someone else in Canada who fits the character of the audition, not the personnel. I wish you the best of luck in your pursuits.

**Yours,
Jason**

Dear Jason,

My apologies for not answering so soon, I'm so busy. I must say I was quite distraught hearing you left Tihs-llub, but I've always believed in your choices, and support your decision. I guess. Have you got in touch with Pia Gilbert yet for an interview? Weather is cold and windy here in New York. Just went to an exhibit that Alan Sondheim was hosting with a poet. He's some sound artist, or was? Lots of cool things happening here in New England; gigs every night, and Boston continues to dish out ecstatic groups. Went to a show where the band droned for forty minutes. Fucking unbelievable! I mean, really right on. When they got off, this other orchestra-group took the stage and had all their old broken and cracked cymbals hanging from the ceiling with chains. Must've been a hundred! I'm doing good. Rent is high, finishing up my B.A. Thanks for the Messiah record for X-mas. Hope you're well.

**Love,
Becky**

**Dear Becky,
I was getting worried we might never speak again, it's been so long since we listened**

to The Wall and watched Alice together, but nevertheless I'm glad you enjoyed the Messiah; Peter Serkin is a note-hunter. Yeah, I corresponded with Alan Sondheim briefly when I was interested in some of his recordings on the ESP label. Said he didn't have many copies but would burn me a few, plus, I gather he's done some sonic soundscape work, too. What's he doing now? I've always loved that ambient genre-- you can do so much by doing so little-- sometimes I wish I kept journeying those days when I hung out in parking garages recording all the sounds with tape recorders. In the end, I hid them throughout the garage because I planned to record a construction crew the following day, but never returned (they might even be still there). If you haven't, hon, I recommend checking out the ESP label; a lotta of free improvisation; and the label kept the spirit (another is Twisted Village). No reply from Pia. The Julliard office says they've dropped her a line, but she's old, and I'm sure quite physically elderly (though people like Richard Davis still keep at it over in Madison-- hell, do you know he played with Stravinsky?). One of the last survivors of the old avant guard (pun intended). Supposedly she knew Schoenberg. Her compositions are very vocal and makes astounding sound, like a painting. When I found her record it was autographed, sold for a buck. Very depressing. I had a Glenn Branca CD under my arm, too. Anyway, I understand your feelings about Tihs-llub, and have been discussing the same matter in letters from other eager people. But, I think I've found the man for the job. Mingus' Tonight At Noon on right now. Write soon.

Love,
J

jason,

interesting point of view, bro. i admire your move but don't know how well this will go over with people on either side of the camp. i mean, the kronos quartet has already been doing this shit for some time. are you one of those who think's everything's been done?? why not alter the experimental stuff with another form of music? heavy-metal even! why i'm writing: i do freelance work and this mag just asked me to write an article on the "hardcore free improvisational genre". deadline's the end of the month. mind if i use you as an example? later. oh yeah, hope you're digging those brothers from Sun Burned Hand of the Man, they cooked up a hellofa' show up my way until these punks started a fight.

-brian

Hi Brian,

Morley Safer walks into a Rothko exhibit and says, "Pictures At An Exhibition...what pictures?" Sure, go right ahead, you can borrow my situation. If a magazine asked me to write that, at this point, I'd tear my hair out. What's to say? You end up drowning in a distorted menu of aesthetics, where you wind up sounding more pretentious than the

actual music you're criticizing or lauding. Simply, I wanted out from the whole scene. I'm not being anti-contemporary, it's just that, PERSONALLY, the old classical stimulates un-reactionary, un-jaded and tranquil feelings that instead of questioning as an authority, I'd rather embellish in and learn. Call me a sap. So obviously not everything's been done. Combining thrash-metal, maybe that's something you should try, sounds good. You can even have do a metalized version of Beethoven's ninth! (are you the guy who plays on dead tree limbs?) You might consider sending some of your recordings to Arthur magazine for review, they're a terrific source for that field. Who sunburned who? What?

*Best,
Jason*

Dear Peter,

My scavenger, are you still down there trying to score an interview with Jandek? Leave him alone! You gave me a copy of his Ready For The House album-- when was it, 87?-- the cement mix still brushed on the cover when you crashed your car that winter. Ha! That reminds me: I heard this kid on an anonymous disc the other night, goes by the name of Martian Subway, and has an ultra high-pitched voice but with very infectious melodies-- one of the better I've heard out of the whole no-rock folk...or whatever. Search him out. And to answer your last letter, I believe we left all those gallon-drum barrels in the woods; guess we weren't gonna use 'em as a drumset after all! I'll let the remainder of Tihs-bull know. Lately, Hovhaness is the only one I'm listening to, although I was riding in a car with a girl who remarked that the tuba section in "Prayer of St. Gregory" was odd. Nevertheless, the man is an example of beautiful and majestic contemporary music. No, sadly, the auditorium I was hoping would let me perform reported my cello techniques weren't sufficient enough to their standards, and get this: "why not continue with the experimental scene of which I was actively contributing to?" Out to sea. Awaiting word from a chap named Daniel in Canada who'll surely collaborate, a few enquiries come in twice a day. Isn't it weird the clash between the academia and the hip? You must interview the reactions between two Debussy lovers: a garbage man and a professor: just to see the results. A note out to you...

*Your brother,
Jason*

Mr. Jason Floyce,

Hello. A teacher-friend of mine forwarded me your want-ad, and I just might fit the description. A young, tenacious harp player of many years (resume can be found on my homepage), and have written a variety of original scores (including one opera). However, living in southern California and having no prior knowledge of experimental music (a few hints of Cage and Henry Cowell here and there), I'm anxious to hear more on what you're proposing. Not sure if I understand your intentions, or how you would go about writing music that, in my opinion, has long since aged.

**Cordially,
Amy O'Brien**

Dear Amy,

Engulfed in reading your last six years of performing and will keep you in mind. The harp moves the vessels, it really does. You might be aware of that record Harp Music For Ancient Temples-- it's a rare beauty. I agree by your quotes, Susan Allen is a terrific player and extremely delicate (she does a sincere job with Cage's "In A Landscape", his most lovely and Satie-esque piece). Yet, I disagree that traditional music has long since aged, it's only been merely cornered, and to me, has thus become more beautiful in the long and overt run. Hovhanness, for example, was a master at composing passionate, modern music. Even Morton Feldman could do it, quietly. Maybe Tihs-llub and anything like it is a Renaissance coming to pass. In the meantime, I shall strive to bring back some of the clarity...is that what I call it these days? God, there's a lot. A year ago I was making making boxes with hidden sounds inside them, passing them to random people on the street with instructions never to open until a very "seminal moment". I even sliced up the ribbon of a tape and wrapped it inside. If someone were to glue the piece back together it was just me talking gibberish.

**Yours,
Jason**

Dear Jason,

Enclosed is your revised paragraph for Marvel Sounds. Thanks. Be on the look-out for it sometime in September, along with a cover story on Russian garage bands and a Michael Hurley retrospective. Have you found someone to play with yet? Also, since you mentioned that Cerberus Shoal band in your letter, thought you might be entertained by a quick review a staff writer did for us on them in last month's issue:

"Immediately when glancing at the cover of Cerebus Shoal's Chaiming The Knoblessone, I knew the watercolor delight would bring forth a skull-splattering sound of beauty and weirdness. Before climbing aboard, it took minutes to scan through the lush pastels, where soon my ear spun like falling pennies in the sea of this jangling improv pomp. Coming out of the woodwork of Maine, the album leaps through a variety of sonic wells with the familiar arches of psychedelic Soft Machine-like intoxication. At points, the music gulps into repetition and does demand a listener of great tolerance and faith, but we're rewarded a ringing magic wand in our hands in the end. --C.W."

***Ben Hammil,
Editor in-chief***

Yo Ben,

Thanks for the review. They're better than Tish-Ilub, that's for sure. They sing. Nothing like being trapped in a show with instrumental garbage and no way to escape without screaming. That's why I loved punk-- someone screamed, it was the music. Looking forward to the Russian feedback. I never listen to Varese, yet I can tell you anything about him.

***Sincerely,
Jason***

Dear Daniel,

It's been well over a week since I last heard from you in regards to the two of us collaborating. If for some reason you're bound deep in the Canadian wilderness and unable to respond to anybody, my apologies if this note is in any way aggravating. Just wanted to further the branch in our ideas. Can you believe I've stopped all connections to Tish-Ilub? Lost all contacts with my European colleagues, too (remarkably, Paris was always very difficult to perform free-improv). There is plenty of music, I don't see the complications of criticizing. Maybe I just lost interest. As much as Berlioz's operas float through the thrift-shops, I've been thinking how little experience I have for the written scale, yet how I possess all the emotional ingredients to feel the music, you know? Debussy, Teleman; it's all there in one vast uproar, but extended from escaping from a source completely different. I know, all the musicians, magazines, and spokesmen who worry about these petty things, and then there's Woody Guthrie. Case closed. Still, take classical adagios-- they churn something that a

library takes years to fill, and yes, I agree with you, it's like falling in love (did I tell you about the time riding on that train listening to that Janacek opera?). You know it the best. I was intrigued to know what you thought of my idea playing certain pieces backwards. Samuel Barber would be the loveliest, and might find rotating his most melancholy scores towards the end of his life would illuminate a sheer radiance. I'm up for it! Let's leave the noise behind, old friend.

*Yours,
Jason*

Dear J,

Yours of the 23rd just in. No time to reply, Canada continues to take me and Claire by the teeth. Music is an honest part of the land, and really no sign of any avant-garde happening, or at least from eyes (not that I was looking). I think your agitation towards the New York affair is brought on by no more than the cosmetics and industry (which probably has contributed to its arts). You were once a vital role in the "sound", which is no more than it is, no? Now you want music. Sensitivity. Understandable. I've been there, though, which is why I write to you on somewhat uncomfortable terms. Tihs-llub has asked me to replace you. They're very excited, and have a scrap-yard of work that's dying. Hate to pull this on you, old buddy, but I just might have to take up their invitation. It's exciting and I don't wanna be spouting the rest of my life with Debussyian hooks. Changes need to come. Hope you can understand.

-D

p.s. let there always be a wanted musician, though.

Soon after, Jason drifted into obscurity and is among the small people who attend both avant-garde shows and operas. Sometimes when the doors open into the outside, you can still hear the crowd whispering his name as they march, shake and scatter away. Any contributions can be made to the Good Music foundation.

Thanks to the Floyce family and all parties involved. All letters used by permission.

NEW Contacts in Poland

1999

Dear Musicians and Improvisators,

**Here are Dariusz Startek and Robert Piotrowicz from Szczecin,
Poland. We organize concerts called JAZZ W KANIE (JAZZ IN KANA).**

**Concerts takes place at TEATR KANA (KANA THEATRE) in Szczecin
and from November '99 it is each Monday.**

**Our idea of music presentation bases on promotion non-commercial
music culture. It has jazz in the name because we complete music from
something what is however connected with jazz (for us that means:
jazz, free, improvised music, experiments, electronics, new music etc.).**

The place we put concerts is as we said TEATR KANA.

**It is small size alternative theatre, but this is one of most important
and famous theatre in Poland and we sure in Europe. This place is as
everybody dreams, good venue, atmosphere, people... For our concerts
it is the best place.**

**What is that letter about? We'd like to invite all improvisators,
experimentators - any kind of musicians looking for art -
to co-operate. Please contact us, we have all things for managing
concerts: venue, sound equipment, press help... you can play here!!!**

There is only one non-optimistic thing, we have low budget.

We usually make cheap tickets, and place can compact about 100 persons, but if we and artists will make effort, there is possibility to find culture institution to cover most important costs.

Our activity is directed to promotion of new arts.

People in Poland have not a lot contacts with such music.

We are still closed from news, by our concerts we want make one sure point where something happens.

Szczecin (north-west Poland, 500 thousands citizens)

is near to German border , so if you play somewhere there

(for example Berlin - only 100 km from Szczecin),

you can come to us and present your music.

We have possibility to find other places for concerts in Poland.

In the theatre we can make workshop, we are open for your propositions. That all for first time, Please reply, send this message to anybody who can interests in that now, or anytime.

All the best in new 2000 year.

**Dariusz Cezary Startek/Robert Piotrowicz
JAZZ W KANIE
ul. Sikorskiego 25
71-072 Szczecin
Poland**

**tel./fax: +48/91/4845495
tel.: +48/91/4494041
tel. kom.: +48/601/732356**

e-mail: dzaz@bph.onet.pl

På svenska

Manifesto Against Music

*Made public on the 24th of March 2000 on the concert ANTIINSTRUMENTAL FRONT – NOISE AGAINST MUSIC
at Fylkingen in Stockholm.*

Published in Swedish in the last issue of Gränsöst, Magazine for Contemporary Music, 2000.

Depolitization and demoralization have been regarded as virtues even among music makers for a long time. Especially young musicians are well on the way to letting themselves be washed away by the hypnosis of repressive tolerance. Everyone likes the avant-garde (especially the "classical" of course) and it is invested in the modern (or, in de-ideologized terms, the "contemporary"), as long as it doesn't demand more than their little stages.

The music industry is just a self-serving circle for reproduction of already established values. It has no goal but to reproduce its market, maximize its profit and defend its positions.

Art music, jazz and the different alternative networks shouldn't believe that they are any exception.

Musicians, cultural administrators and writers that don't encourage methods to create excitement, beauty and shock (the creative and convulsive confusion) aren't worth any respect.

Instrumentalists that don't want to exceed their own and their instrument's history and limitations, who don't want to achieve the magical, the astonishing, should hang their instruments on the wall and make room for others that have something substantial to give. They're in the way!

I turn against musical pitiableness, in favour of those who want to give sound back its explosive possibility to surprise, make us amazed, shiver, cry and laugh.

For the instinctive, absurd, unmusical, raw, extremely romantic, vertiginous, improbable, revolting, tangible, explicit, material, concrete, grotesque, perverse.

For sound making that is and expresses an urge to use all known and unknown possibilities in life, and try to discover those that haven't been used before.

Against a formalistic "plurality" and pseudo-democratic inclusion of mediocrity and fool-virtuosity. For the "amateurs" and dilettantes that yearn for biting off more than they can chew, go too far, risk making fools of themselves - as long as they're willing to take responsibility for their actions, as long as they have an adventure to share with us with open eyes, and no image, wealth, position or fame to conquer(none of these are worth it).

What I demand first of all is an uncompromising consciousness about the miserable situation of music today and an uncompromising aspiration toward inspired freedom of thought. What I demand is to name the many failures and limitations of these aspirations by their real name: failures and limitations. What I demand is to attack the illusion that the limitation of freedom is grand or even acceptable, that unfreedom could even be freedom.

Against all cultural politics! If we use such things, it has to be in self-defence, in resistance, and it has to be said explicitly!

The striving for a cultural position is entirely nauseating. The avant-garde (or the "new") have voluntarily made themselves a hostage to power and even worse - they glorify it.

To create a new universe of wonders is a prerequisite for life. Anything less is a compromise.

The culturally commercial "news" are always shallow, harmless and ingratiating, i.e. not at all new but a total confirmation of the scheme of things.

The revolutionary will always be presented as old and antiquated. Certainly, revolt has its traditions and inspirations, but it's aiming at replacing the very foundations of its critics, the commercial and contemptuous foundations of culture.

Those who only want to make music aren't worthy of representing mankind. Those who with their music or in other ways only want to reconcile, make peace, heal, cheer up and amuse, betray all ideals about complete freedom. Those who claim that music is only music are liars and police. For them the state is only a state (or even "everybody"!) and not an organized class war. For them, a poor person is just poor, not exploited, for them, advertising is information and not a weapon of exploitation and stupidifying. For them, news is not propaganda. For them, Sweden (or England) is the best country in the world and not a hypocritical, self-flattering imperialism. For them, ideology is just a topic of conversation, not a part of our every-day life. For them, people who see through western propaganda are hysterical terrorists. For them, Hollywood is not a defense of white American middle class lifestyle but culture, i.e. on the same side as their own culture, only more successful, thus more enviable. They say music is just music, it's something to do if you're suited to it, just like some become executioners, street sweepers, millionaires or drug addicts. They are proud of their stupidity and want to impose their stupidity upon us. For them, sound making can never be visionary, never an expression of the burning necessity to transform misery into miracle, to find gold in the dunghill, to break with repression and to conquer freedom.

Music is an art form. Of the arts, it's sometimes said they are possibly beautiful but definitely useless. But all music is functional and exists in relation to its situation. No music, no art, is made for eternity. The concept of art must be erased in order for us to see what art is replacing: the revolt of beauty, truth and adventure against ugliness, lie and boredom. A necessary paradox: if beauty, truth and adventure were self-evident in life, there would be no contradiction and thus no "art" as a separate domain.

The development of art from a craft with a social function into the right of individualists to express their wishes (in the illusion of being independent of an audience), corresponds to the development of the free market towards world hegemony. Everybody has something to sell and must themselves motivate the price on their goods. Artists are supposed to create an image of themselves that is marketable. If they have no personality, they must invent it, and conform to the needs of the market, or to the niche that suits them. In this way, both art products and artists are objectified with good help from themselves. Of course, art expresses the conditions and illusions of artists: their plea to the market for mercy.

The centre of music is really an interaction on the occasion of the performance or the listening, not just the sound object itself. Music must consciously be made for its special situation. We have a limited lifetime and -place and must relate to it. The same counts for musical works - children of their time and situation, not summarizing any eternal principle.

There's no difference between the process of performing music and the wishes of life of the musicians. If we discuss what is important for music, we must discuss what is important for man. What is then? To get rid of repression and famine, to liberate play, beauty, love and poetry. To inspire and induce courage. Music has no strategy like politics, music does it through action, must in itself be the necessary revolt, contain all the violence and straightforwardness that is needed for the liberation of beauty - it is reality as well as utopia.

Of the arts, I demand the same thing as of artists: to favour freedom and to inspire others to take their liberties, to revolt, create, improvise, invent. Even a "musical work", not only its preparation or the act of composition, must show a desire to experiment and open itself for processes, constitute an attempt, not mass produced, dead and meaningless perfection. Music is no special life form, but, if it has the possibility of being something, it is an image of the ideal life. We have to demand beauty, truth and freedom of everything: Music is a meeting between matter and body (the spiritualized: living, thinking and feeling body) - between body and body. It is impossible without two things: matter as a medium of turbulence, and spiritualized structures, i.e. the same that is demanded of and constitutes life. An "ideal music", or more correctly, musical activity, "musicking" (to use Christopher Small's term) can thus be a source of inspiration for the transformation of life and the world according to your ideals.

Music of course reflects the world. A social structure and general public that is stereotyped, commercial and dominated by the personality market, gets the music it deserves. That's why resistance is called for on all levels to stand against these structures. New and unusual beauties, structures and musical situations must be explored and invented, clichés in aesthetics and performance be challenged, the commercial forms counteracted with alternative formats and networks, but it has to be done without illusions about the little place given to music in commercial culture.

[Contact](#)
[The Welcome Page](#)

This page updated the 3rd of August 2008.
<http://www.bergmark.org/manifesto.html>

AETHER FEST

<http://www.kunm.org>

AETHER FEST 1: Festival of International Radio Art

Sunday, June 1, 2003

Aether Fest is a month-long celebration of adventurous, experimental radio art that will debut on KUNM throughout the month of June 2003.

"The Wild, the Beautiful, and the Just Plain Weird"

This June, KUNM teams up with Nonsequitur and the Harwood Art Center to host Aether Fest, an exciting new festival of international experimental radio art.

Now, consider those last three words and how rarely they are ever heard together. You'd be forgiven for being mystified by this phrase. In many countries there is a tradition of artists making new works for radio (sometimes called Ars Acustica or Hörspiel), but the concept remains largely alien here. Yet there is a global network of intrepid radiomakers who persist in pushing the boundaries of the medium, creating wildly imaginative audio art that challenges accepted notions of what radio is and does. Some manage to find their way onto the air -- remember Joe Frank, or the New American Radio series? -- but most remain unheard in America. Aether Fest offers a rare showcase for this adventurous work, including new projects by three local artists commissioned especially for this event.

So just what is Radio Art? Well, it's not really "music," though it often includes musical sounds. It's not quite "radio theater," though it may be dramatic. It isn't exactly "spoken word," though it can be very poetic. It isn't what's usually considered "documentary," though it might incorporate sounds and stories from real life. It avoids established radio genres, except to subvert them. It's not about DJs spinning discs, but it could recycle previously broadcast material in a new form. Radio Art can be beautiful, noisy, abstract, moving, humorous, profound, or confusing. Think "cinema for your ears" (if you must). But forget the Hollywood blockbusters, or even those independent features and documentaries that still behave like "normal" movies. Instead, think of those weird little art films with hardly any commercial potential, made by crazy people with no money who are just obsessively in love with light and motion. Now, close your eyes and open your ears.

You could read up on the subject (we recommend "Radio Rethink," "Radiotext(e)," and "Wireless Imagination"). Better yet, listen on Sunday and Thursday nights in June and experience it first hand. And don't forget to visit "Transmission," a companion show of visual art on the theme of radio at the Harwood Art Center in downtown Albuquerque.

"Sleep Concert" Kicks Off Aether Fest Special Projects

There's a certain mystique around the overnight shift. Being the lone DJ in an empty station spinning

records in the wee hours while most of the world sleeps is a singular radio experience. Every now and then some fellow night owl calls to reassure you that yes, there is someone listening out there. And at 3 AM, "freeform" can take on a whole new meaning. This is when inspired mad professor DJs can get away with almost anything -- mixing all the turntables and CD players and cart machines at once, having musicians and poets come jam in the studio, putting random callers on the air...

But Aether Fest is about doing radio differently, even the graveyard shift. So instead of providing the usual entertainment for insomniacs, we thought we'd offer something special for our listeners who normally miss the overnight slot. You know, the ones who are asleep.

From 11 PM on Sunday, June 8 until 5 AM Monday morning, acclaimed Bay Area ambient/electronic composer Robert Rich will visit KUNM to perform "Somnium," a composition intended for sleeping audience. Rich usually performs this piece as a Sleep Concert, with the audience camped out in the performance space. But since it's a work night, we thought we'd let you experience it in the comfort of your own cozy bed, without a bunch of strangers snoring all around you.

Developed between 1994 and 2000, and recently released as a 7-hour long audio-only DVD, "Somnium" was created as a soundtrack for your dreams. And dreamy it is. Rich weaves a deep and sonorous blanket of gentle synth drones, murky environmental sounds, and extended instrumental passages charted to correspond with the different levels of sleep most of us pass through in the course the night. So curl up with that bedside radio turned on at a suitably low volume and let yourself drift in and out of this nocturnal sonic environment. Up all night? Tune in anyway, there's plenty to reward the wide awake listener.

www.robertrich.com/rrsomnium.html

This is the complete program schedule for Aether Fest 2003. Works included in each program are listed alphabetically by artist.

SUNDAY, JUNE 1 @ 8:30-10:30 PM

Aether Fest honors some older radio works that we consider classics:

Robert Ashley (NYC) "Yellow Man with Heart with Wings"
(produced by Ned Sublette at KUNM)

Samuel Beckett, text / Morton Feldman, music (Ireland/USA) "Words & Music"
(produced & directed by Everett C. Frost)

Kenneth Patchen, text / John Cage, music (USA) "The City Wears a Slouch Hat"
(performed by Essential Music)

Hildegard Westerkamp (Canada) "Kits Beach Soundwalk"

THURSDAY, JUNE 5 @ 10 PM - 1 AM

Radio art from Latin America & Spain:

Lidia Camacho & Jorge Reyes (Mexico) "Zocaloop"

Oscar Alonso Inclan (Mexico) "Cinco Radioartes Basados en la Obra de Manuel Álvarez Bravo"

Laboratorio de Experimentación Artística Sonora (Mexico) "Radio Gutura"

Antonio López (Santa Fe, NM) "Radio Alchemist"

Francisco López (Spain) "Sonic Dust"

Mario Mota (Mexico) "Sinicuichi"

Jorge Reyes (Mexico) "Los Proverbios del Enfierno"

Anabella Solano (Mexico) "Canto a la Muerte"

Mario Verandi (Argentina/Germany) "Traces & Shadows" + "Fréquences de Barcelona"

SUNDAY, JUNE 8 @ 8:30 - 10:30 PM

Almost Music - radio art that doesn't talk much:

Christian Banasik (Germany) "Letzte Gebärde offener Münder"

Steve Bradley & John Sturgeon (Baltimore, MD) "Dotted Lines"

Loren Chasse (San Francisco, CA) "Apparition Radio"

Martin Daske (Germany) "Newt, Contemplating a Sunken Chess Game"

Chantal Dumas (Canada) "Send"

Slavek Kwi (Czech Republic/Ireland) "Pet Radio"

Seth Nehil (Brooklyn, NY) "Naos"

Lidia Zielinska (Poland) "Musica Humana, or: How Symphonies Are Born"

SUNDAY, JUNE 8 @ 10:30 -10:50 PM
Aether Fest hosts the Radio Theater slot:

Dean Santomieri (Oakland, CA) "A Book Bound in Red Buckrum"

SUNDAY, JUNE 8 @ 10:50 PM - 5:00 AM
Live, on-air overnight concert for sleeping audience:

Robert Rich (San Francisco, CA) "Somnium"

THURSDAY, JUNE 12 @ 10 PM - 1 AM
World Tour - assorted soundscapes:

Deborah Begel (La Madera, NM) "Ode to Rain"

Warren Burt (USA/Australia) "Point King Beach Memories"

Chris Cutler (England) "Twice Around the World"

Rebecca Marshall (England) "Empty Building Dreams"

Andra McCartney (England/Canada) "Canada Trainradio 1: Montréal - Winnipeg"

Michelle Nagai (Brooklyn, NY) "Study for Ec(h)olocator"

Sarah Peebles (USA/Canada) "Walking Through Tokyo at the Turn of the Century"

Philip Perkins (Albany, CA) "Choral Works"

Peter Stollery (Scotland) "ABZ/A"

Massimo Toniutti (Italy) "Omaggio Radiofonico alla Stazione di Topolo"

SUNDAY, JUNE 15 @ 8:30-10:30 PM
War Correspondence:

Ann Racuya Robbins (La Puebla, NM) "War & the Inevolution of Grace"
(live, on-air performance of new work commissioned by Aether Fest)

Chris DeLaurenti (Seattle, WA) "Two Secret Wars"

Barrett Golding (Bozeman, MT) "Bright Chrysanthemum"

René Mogensen (Denmark/Belgium) "Terror og Penge"

Pauline Oliveros (Kingston, NY) "Poem of Change"

Helen Thorington (Brookline, MA) "9.11.01 Scapes"

SUNDAY, JUNE 15 @ 10:30-11:30 PM
Aether Fest hosts the Radio Theater slot:

Anna Rubin & Laurie Hollander (Baltimore, MD) "Family Stories: Sophie, Sally"

David Kolber (Canada) "Wheel. Chair."

THURSDAY, JUNE 19 @ 10 PM - 1 AM
More radio art classics from the archive:

Terry Allen (Santa Fe, NM) "Bleeder"

Sheila Davies (Berkeley, CA) "What Is the Matter in Amy Glennon?"

Willem de Ridder & Hafler Trio (The Netherlands) "Report"

Malcolm Goldstein (USA/Canada) "Ishi: timechangingspaces"

Glenn Gould (Canada) "The Latecomers"

Richard Kostelanetz (NYC) excerpt from "Invocations"

David Moss (USA/Germany) "Language Linkage"

Others TBA...

SUNDAY, JUNE 22 @ 8:30 -10:30 PM
Abstracted Locales - the subtle essence of place:

Raylene Campbell (Canada) "Arctic"

Arsenije Jovanovic (Serbia-Montenegro) "Four Winds"

Eric La Casa (France) "Remanences"

Richard Lerman (Phoenix, AZ) "From Dark to Light...but Dark"

Lou Mallozzi (Chicago, IL) "Things in Their Place"

SUNDAY, JUNE 22 @ 10:30 - 11:30 PM

Aether Fest hosts the Radio Theater slot:

Experimental Studio of Slovak Radio (Slovak Rep.) "The Woman with Black Wings"

Morten Sondergaard (Denmark/Italy) "Aether"

THURSDAY, JUNE 26 @ 10 PM - 1 AM

Radionoise - harnessed signals and hijacked broadcasts:

Thomas Ashcraft (Lamy, NM/NYC) "Jumpering Wild Electricities from Outer Space"
(new work commissioned by Aether Fest)

Alchemical Burn (Albuquerque, NM) "It Is, Is It"

Charles Benefiel (Albuquerque, NM) "Drift"

Brownsierra (England) "Oral Project: Something Here in the Recordings"

John Duncan (USA/Italy) "Phantom Broadcast"

Jeff Gburek (Albuquerque, NM) "Improvisation for Shortwave Radio #2"

Gydja (New Zealand) "Khora"

Jim Haynes (San Francisco, CA) "Magnetic North #1"

Robert Horton (El Cerrito, CA) "Radio Scrape"

Elsa Justel (Argentina/France) "La Radio, ca detend"

Antonio López (Santa Fe, NM) "AM Clock Radio Jam"

René Mogensen (Denmark/Belgium) "News Clips Study #1"

Steve Roden (Pasadena, CA) "The Radio"

Sidanik (Albuquerque, NM) "1710 kHz"

Eva Sjuve (Sweden) "Fake Radio"

SUNDAY, JUNE 29 @ 8:30 - 10:30 PM

Talking Box - text & documentary works:

Sumner Carnahan (Santa Fe, NM) "Dido's Revenge"
(new work commissioned by Aether Fest)

Jacki Apple (Los Angeles, CA) "Kokoro No Mai/Spirit Dancer"

Ed DeBuvitz (Albuquerque, NM) "He Was Told"

María Esteves (Argentina/Los Angeles, CA) "We All Gonna Be Homeless Pretty Soon"

Monica Kidd (Canada) "Exciting Silence"

Tae Hong Park (Princeton, NJ) "Omoni" + "Aboji"

Susan Stone (Berkeley, CA) "Jump" + "Couch"

Deborah Stratman (Chicago, IL) "In Order Not to Be Here"

Gregory Whitehead (Boston, MA) "Proposition Two" + "Evil Axis"

SUNDAY, JUNE 29 @ 10:30 - 11:30 PM

Aether Fest hosts the Radio Theater slot:

Chantal Dumas (Canada) "In the Pale Grey Days"

Paul Goodman & Jos Janssen (Netherlands) "Les Petites Mortes"

Aether Fest is a joint project of KUNM, Nonsequitur, and Harwood Art Center. To receive future e-

mail updates about the festival, contact Steve Peters at Nonsequitur, nonseq@swcp.com. Or call him at 505-224-9483 for other info.

[Email nonseq@swcp.com](mailto:nonseq@swcp.com) ☐

Music Quotes

Compiled by [Gregory Acker](#)

2004

Improvisation as a Form of Cultural Recreation

by [LaDonna Smith](#)

2004

I propose, **that in our society, the musician could once again rise as proponent and leader of primal ritual celebration, using music, as a tool of cultural recreation.** Accepting the premise that all people have their own unique voices and expressions, translate that into a common musical gift, which can realized in all people.

Recreational music improvisation is facilitated by musical leadership, whether it is by shaman, jazz musician, contemporary music educator, neighborhood band leader, or common social initiation.

The role of music in our lives must become more immediate. It must become more a part of our own bio-rhythms, and daily rituals. Just like going to the gym, or having lunch or sleep, or a moment's meditation. What a gift of time it would give us, to sing every day. To transform time into singing. To play everyday, like children. Maintaining the playfulness, the curious, the imaginative, the qualities that are so rich and natural to us in our childhood. Must we grow up only to work, and never to play? A sad condition for the human spirit, indeed.

The role of music education, then, must shift, to accommodate the education of all people, not just to train music specialists. As well, it must even move beyond the oral tradition of learning songs, the native songs of each culture, which have traditionally, "in the old days" been passed down as folk songs, but unfortunately, today, are actually being lost. Musical education must evolve beyond traditional technical training on musical instruments, and the historic approach to styles and contemporary composition practices which alienate and exclude a large portion of our society. Music practice could, on the other hand, be inclusive of every child and person, and encourage participation on wide spread scale as a recreational form, just as certain sports have become the "national past-time." What is needed is a massive re-education of the population, bringing a heightened awareness of making music as personal leisure, and that in our society, this too, is personal medicine.

We must, as practitioners and educators, bring a new focus to the frontlines of our own practice. As leaders in our field, we must encourage those with no musical experience outside turning a radio knob or pressing a cd player to participate together, to feel what it feels like when one "plays". To break the barriers of education, and instead, create exchange between those persons, and the privileged ones with formal musical backgrounds and professional experience. **We must encourage the novice to experiment.** We must give them permission, and equip them with a philosophy that brings comfort AND curiosity. Beginning with the given factor that first, there is silence, second there is noise, and third, from those two points, will rise a musical order. And, that "order" will be determined, by the musical genes of the individual. What I am calling the "musical genes" is the pre-disposition of music which is inherent in every human being as a result of their cultural background, their education and experience, (or lack of it), and their exposure. Their physical abilities to move, and their acquired skills of listening and responding are no different in this case, than in the case of learning to "catch a ball" or learning to ski. Basically, if we encourage group music, with a wide-angle philosophy of what that is, we open new doors for a "cultural recreation".

Because of the mass media and musical marketing practices in our society, this could be a difficult undertaking. People are barraged and dulled by aggressiveness of the popular music market. Particularly, the practices of commercial radio and television networks, which seize profits from pushing the market directions through advertising short-term hits and trends, so that many people see music as a hat-rack, upon which to hang their emotional complaints... as in songs which lament lost lovers, or elevate sexual frustration. (ie. "I want you" etc.) Of course, then on the other hand, there is the Christian music market, which also uses music to hang the hats of their texts of belief and hope. And there are the Public Radio Stations, which in my area of the U.S. (down South in Alabama), still insists that classical music is it for high art music. A little jazz is done for 4 hours on weekends to satisfy the popular culture, and powdermilk biscuits are part of the course of comedy and "mom and pop" mentality, seeping in as a "old timey" folk music... But what of the music which is being currently created in our time? Even on NPR, to hear this is a rare event! And still, this is all available from loudspeakers, airwaves, electronic medium, without the need of a real musical instrument in the room. I like to compare it to a frozen dinner! Ah, the corporate kitchen has supplied us with a ready made frozen dinner to eat. But where did it come from?

Still, there is a need for human beings to return to the practice of music as a **personal expression**-- of emotion, thought, and condition of the soul. This can be done through the genesis of a creative music-making, based on sounding energies; not just using the conventional backdrops of pop-music as a vehicle for verbalized conditions, such as song. The act of engaging in free improvisation will become a

liberator, an emancipator, for many people to touch into their emotional lives in a non-verbal and a non-judgmental way. We must introduce this healthy way of life.

From a basic understanding that noise is the music of the Universe, that noise is good, that noise is normal, that silence is the other side of noise, the direct inverse of noise. That which is full becomes empty. Consider it as though we have a full vase of water (noise). We pour some water from the vase, taking some of the elements out of the noise. We hold these elements. Separated from the noise, they are art. We drink from it and are nourished. On the other hand, we visit the empty vase, the Silence. We sit with it. We listen. We hear. From Silence rise out the inner voices, which talk to us. We listen. We pour water back into the vase. It is art, it is music, and it is the expression of our own lives. Our lives become full again. Who is not "too busy"? We live constantly between the Noise and the Silence. It is what we do with our lives in between which brings the order, or the "music" that we make.

I have been speaking in a metaphorical language, using the term "music" to mean, "our lives". But are not our lives a form of music? With this awareness, shall we not enjoy life? Shall we not pick up our tools and till our gardens? Shall we not from either Noise or Silence, make music?

Back to cultural recreation. Let us use this opportunity to re-evaluate the condition of music in our society. Let us not look only to our Shamans, the composers, the jazz musicians, the pop-stars, or even the media, and the market, for our music. Let us look within ourselves. As an educator, I would take the responsibility to lead and encourage every human being to make their own music. And one of best ways I can think of, is the practice of musical improvisation. Anybody can do it. Everyone can participate. For some, indeed, for many, it may take some introduction. But if we can continue the dialog with our children, our peers, and the ordinary people in our audiences, we can make a "collective music," which will bring about more healing in the world than a century of psychoanalysts and shrinks. What people need is the non-verbal connections to their inner selves. They need access to their places of Silence and their Noise, and the tools to make music from these two extreme conditions. Musicians all share this magic. We must make this gift available to everyone.

O.K., it's very simple. Every human being should have a musical instrument. Of course, we all have a musical instrument, as we were born with our voices and our bodies. We use our voices. We use our bodies, everyday. We use them to communicate. We use them to talk, to cry, to scream, to laugh, to express our emotions. We Sing. We use our voices to carry the melodies of our poetry. But we also have at our fingertips, tools. A musical instrument is a tool to carry us even further in our discovery process to the realm of non-verbal musical exchanges. If

you will, indulge me in another simple metaphor. We can plow our fields with our hands. But we have learned to use hoes, picks, and shovels. Earth-movers, such as tillers, ditch-witches, steam shovels, and caterpillars. And, we've even moved mountains by detonating dynamite! We learned to count on our fingers. But we also learned to employ the abacus, the adding machine, then modern calculators, and now computers to facilitate our mathematical computations and projections. Why then, does not everyone play also a musical instrument?

I suppose it is because we have not emphasized enough in our society, music as a recreational form. We can make sounds together, born from either noise or silence. We can create a form of cultural recreation, which will bring pleasure, joy, and fulfillment. It is within the range of everyone, or anyone, to participate.

Our concepts of musical instruments also must be challenged. Of course, we have the classical instruments of our cultures. We now have the high-tech, the experimental, and the yet undiscovered. Perhaps the first inquiry should be, "How can I make a sound"? What will I use? And furthermore, make expression from the sound. Collective engagement with others making sounds from our choice of instruments, whether it is a violin, a saxophone, a blade of grass, or a metal pot or pan, creates then a collective sound. It is much like having a palette of colors from which to paint. A bucket of noise from which we can draw out the waters of our imaginations... To shape and mold our "found sounds" into cups of substance, something we not only recognize as our own, but that we enjoy, and which belongs to us. The pleasure of it all is the point.

Look around you. See the myriad of possibilities. What would you choose to play if you could imagine yourself singing through a musical tool? It is as personal as a favorite color, a food preference, or a favorite breed of dog. It's as available as your favorite color or food preference. It is really just an awareness. So, let's take up our musical instruments, and proceed into the noise and the silence with fearless, but playful abandon to discover what is within. And in the process of this journey, we will be given insights, guide-posts, and new territories to discover. What could be more fun? What kind of recreation is this? This, indeed, would be a cultural "re-creation" of our Society. . .

Some Suggestions for Playing

1. Create a piece from silence. Start sparsely by humming. Be sure to hear the silence before making a sound. Stay with it a while. Find an ending.

2. Create a piece from Noise. Just go at it. Don't worry about a thing...Watch as you hear it organizing itself.

3. Create a piece using "voiceless" mouth and body techniques. Remember that some sound is visual. Build on the natural flow of rhythms and/or space. Just notice where it goes.

4. INWARD/OUTWARD One group starts with long blending tones or horizontal attitude Other individuals make exceptions, with specific, possibly short interruptive sounds. See what happens.

5. If there are instruments, check them out "See what they will do" or see what they do for you.

The only requirement is to have respect for the process.

These are just some simple rules: as in a game to play.

Improvisatory compositions are created by awareness and willingness to play. Game rules help create structures, awareness recognizes these structures. The things to develop recognition for are shapes, colors, beginnings, middles or developments, endings, ambience, and resonance.

The personal process can be going inward, or outwardly playing; but either way relating to the external dimensions.

The attitude is to enjoy!



Home - Texts - Galleries - Other media - Links - Contact

Original text written in Swedish for *Mannen på gatan* #2 - Surrealism 1994 / *The Man In The Street* #2,, Surrealistförlaget, Stockholm 1994. Enlarged and translated for *Experimental Musical Instruments* vol. 10 #4, June 1995, California.

Comment, 2004: After ten years, some of the opinions and some of the statements in this articles have naturally changed. Some information could be added about the development (or not) of some of the ideas, some new instruments have been made and some more references could change. However, I have only chosen to replace directly misleading things, like literature references that should be links instead of (old) addresses. For the developments of my ideas, my music and instruments I simply refer to newer sources and articles on my web site. This article is still well worth reading anyway.

🇸🇪 PÅ SVENSKA.

Call For The Hidden Sounds

Johannes Bergmark

1. Birth of music magic.

Sound is movements of matter. Matter in stillness has a quality that I will label as *sound potential energy*, like a rock which can start falling at any time from a mountain top if you push it. Music is mediation of movements between *human bodies*, through pulses in the air (sometimes with a middle link of location energy - recording; sometimes only the musician's own body in loneliness communicating with itself through the medium). It is always an *indirect* mediation of the body movements: the body is never self-sufficient, not even when you are dancing or singing. The body, moreover, is *spiritualized*, researching its relation to the spirit, excited by the vibrations. All the joints involve spiritual attitudes, sexual and sublimized desires, back to the own body of the musician, to the amount of air to the meeting (listening) bodies (and their thinking), to the bodies themselves in potential movement and to all the matter that leads the movement away from all bodies in endless dilution. To the degree that the music is opened for a total investigation and bewildering of all the joints, or if it is overmastering in a direction beyond the everyday, it can have *magical* potential - it can reveal important hidden forces. Certain dominating attitudes to matter and people, however, limit this magical potential and form conventions that define what is (communicates as) music and what is (does) not.

A deepening of the understanding of the movements of matter and its meanings to the movements of the body starts with an inventory of the collected potential energies that lie hidden in and around the body: a concentration in stillness and silence. At the first scratch, bang or hiss (sometimes even a movement in silence) a focusing takes place, the point of departure for a movement of movements. Through this meta-movement, desire - this huge collection of abstract potential energies - is given possibilities to transform itself into concrete but transient pulses through matter. These pulses recreate new movements through the bodies but are at the same time apprehended as independent objects that last longer than the actual sounds by their being incorporated into imagination. Such sound-referring objects of movement are identifiable in the same way as words and visual forms, and even though these domains are kept apart by senses and concept, they are born in a corresponding way and can have parallel inner laws and structures. Here, a spiritual concretization takes place, which is soon surrounded by memories, prejudices, conventions; and the reproduction, the mediation, of the pulse of movement becomes followed and affected by the parallel *spiritual* pulse and their structures mirror each other. The inner relation that you perceive between musical objects indirectly mirrors the conception you have about the objects in the thinking.

Here is thus a corresponding parallel fork in the road of attitude: the pulse of movement can be halted or directed into systems that aim at maintaining or establishing a certain material or ideological structure. Another way is, by means of active interest for, or passive curiosity on the unknown possibilities of development of the pulse, to open doors, to draw threads, to attach resonators, to lead the spark over to other rooms. But also to actively break off and shock it in order to discover patterns of surprises. This play without evident goals does not necessarily have anything to do with knowledge, skillfulness, message or art. It is a native life instinct, the one that from the very beginning made us discover everything. The person trying this road, will see that it, as time goes by, is neither structureless nor arbitrary. The structures are a potential inherent in the details, and if this is developed freely, structures are created by themselves. They can even create traditions - yes, all traditions are created that way.

The given music and the given instruments around us are only one, and a very winding, road. To choose this *without* regularly returning to an inventory of the bodily potential energies - desire - is a failure, a tragic forgery. The illusion of stage art, to manage, to rapidly conquer a social role, distorts the picture of the *real* possibilities, *even* the social ones. The free development of play to make life more beautiful and give us deeper knowledge about the material bodies, presupposes a total despair of or suspicion of all *means*, above all those (art, stage ...) that are connected to promising the kind of place of the ego in the world, where it is given a touch of fame - immortality, immobility, self-sufficiency, non-curiosity, symbolism, giving-up, conservatism, stupification.

But the stage, and all other means, must *also* be able to be used as fields of experiment to refine the *sensibility*. This sensibility for musical (poetic) potential energy, though, is not necessarily expressive. Communication doesn't have to start from stage, it could have as its point of departure the kidneys of the audience as well as the cold air outside. No one has basically anything more to express than anyone else. But the sensibility demands training, renewed training.

* * *

2. Birth of means.

My interest in music was liberated by quitting my piano lessons. I was mostly curious on "incomprehensible" music, but came to believe that I

was in conflict with my political commitment. The conflict was clarified for me by surrealism, i.e. creation as a result of all the psychic levels in accordance instead of only consciousness or tradition. Ideas of complexity, pedagogy or message, I rejected in favor of poetic freedom. I indulged in free improvisation and Cecil Taylor became my "master". Many experiments and much searching was made in the Stockholm Surrealist Group (of which I am still one of the members) when it formed in 1985. We played on anything in spite of "previous knowledge". The focussing of the playing was gradually increased. I discovered an until then, unknown power in my body, independent of my consciousness, capable of guiding the course of events independently and creating its own structures. The formal freedom, then, was not anymore such a central point, but instead the invocation of, the listening to this corporeal demon - individually as well as in collective playing. I understood that there must be a correspondence to this in dance, and my childhood passion for acrobatics and climbing got a new significance through this return. (Later, I found a surprising connecting link, though not a full equivalent, to the Japan-born *Butoh* dance movement.)

The Chicago (nowadays Cedarburg, WI) surrealist Hal Rammel introduced me to the playing of the musical saw and instrument invention as well. I made experimental tunings of my piano, first at random (inspired by a text by August Strindberg), then a "wave-tuned" non-even-to-the-octave (narrower in the middle). I got the Australian drone wind instrument (with circular breathing) *didjeridoo* and the Bengal one-string *gopychand*, both very expressive and rich in spite of their simplicity.(1) With my first instrument, the piano, I was lacking this simple inner understanding, which led me to the only vocational education I have ever started voluntarily: the piano technicians' class. In the workshops at the school, I started to build instruments.

Those who have once tasted the powerful nucleus of improvisation, can not return as the same person; I think this is also the case with instrument invention, which is the same kind of search for the naturally hidden sound - in the body, or in objects of all kinds, without separating "practical" objects from "aesthetic" ones. German anthropologist Hans Peter Duerr e.g., writes in "Sedna oder die Liebe zum Leben" (1985): "Generally, the music bow of the bushmen, which also appears among the negroes of Africa [...] is identical with the hunting bow [...], but that doesn't necessarily have to mean that the bow was *first* used as a hunting tool and then as a musical instrument. What if the relation was opposite!" My reaction was: "what if the musical saw came before the tool saw?" ... Then, after having read about one of those having united "practical" and "aesthetic", and his instrument inventions (Emanuel Winternitz: *Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician* 1982), I got two dreams:

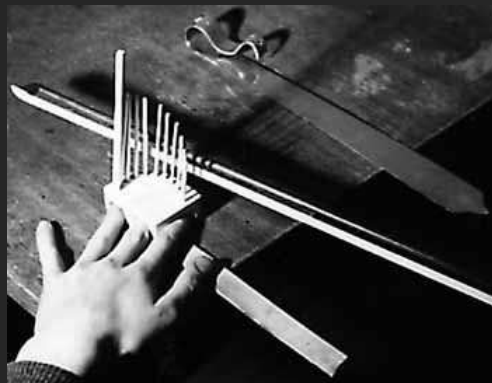
I saw a one-string instrument (similar to the *gopychand* but with no neck) where the resonator is held and kept in tension with one foot in the air (you stand on only one foot) and the other end of the string is fastened and kept in tension with a thong around your neck. You play it with a bow.(2) I wanted to realize this, and found a butter box which would serve as a resonator, and made a double, crossing loop of thick piano wire through the bottom, that would serve as a bridge by the string going through it.(3) The instrument's name became *butter bass*. It turned out to be very rich in overtones: it can embrace a large timbre field, although it doesn't make it easy to play conventional "melodies". As the tension of the string can be varied very quickly, the instrument's sound can jump between earthquake-like percussive roar, lyrical chirping of flageolets which are achieved with the light touch of the free hand (4), and a gigantic train brake when the bow plays strongly close to the end of the string. That's more than usually expected from a single string! To realize the strange one-legged playing position from the dream, I thought about placing a stirrup at the far end of the butter box, but the stirrup idea would only return later in another instrument. The *butter bass* became a seated position instrument, with both feet against box and floor.



Hal Rammel (left) and Johannes Bergmark playing a saw duet, displaying two of Rammel's instruments. Photo © by Gina Litherland.



The Butter Bass.



Bergmark playing the Hedgehog. The Forked Silver Tongue above it. Photo © by Christian Werner.

In the other dream there was a drum with a metal tongue fastened on the skin. The tongue would be played with a bow and, according to the dream, change pitch as the skin was pressed. (5) The dream is acoustically not logical, as the drum skin would be a resonator and not alter the pitch of the tongue. I haven't built this instrument according to the dream either - but it has made me aware of the easily accessible possibilities to sound variation that all thin, stiff and slim objects like knives, ice cream sticks etc., have, when held against the edge of a resonator (e.g. a table or a drum) and played on their overhanging part with a bow. Here too there is a surprising range of variation from creaking, whistling, squeaking and humming, depending on length and material and on the speed, pressure and placement of the bow. The ice cream sticks can be surprisingly similar to the human voice's complaining, singing, sighing or wondering sounds.(6)

I also made a special silver-plated tool, called *silver rod*, to make the maneuvering easier. It turned out to be too squeaky but it could produce an interesting ghostly vibrato through its bigger size and weight. Later, when I cut the end in half, I got rid of much of the noise, and renamed it *forked silver tongue*.

The *hedgehog* is a more successful variation in wood, and has a garland of wooden sticks as well, that protrude at a small angle upwards on the finger holder, and who give a fine whistle or squeak from the bow.



Bergmark playing the Metal Harp.

Dreaming and chance, and the surprisingly useful turning-points that "failures" provide, were points of departure for creation, and lack of "ideas", knowledge and materials haven't been any decisive obstacles. Instruments that at first seemed to be "failures" in relation to my expectations, soon "taught" me what their point was and how they wanted to be played. That attitude I also try to have in relation to traditional instruments that I "can't play". I have also taken all the chances to make traditional instruments: 5-string kantele (ancient Finnish/Baltic string instrument), Swedish bagpipe, clavichord (2 different ones), lur (Nordic wooden harmonic trumpet), Hardanger fiddle (Norwegian folk variation on the violin and viola d'amore, with sympathetic strings) and renaissance recorder, and I also made a *didjeridoo* of clay, curved like an alto saxophone.



The Clay Didjeridoo and Maiden Crown.

Rammel's circular bowed instruments (7) and the saw gave me the idea to the *metal harp*, with triangular sheetings welded around a copper tube, which besides being played with a bow, also can be used as a trumpet, flute or percussion instrument. The bright timbre of the plates shimmers extra when you spin the instrument in your lap.

The *maiden crown*, circular as well and made of clay, I built when I discovered the beautiful ring as I used a bow on a protruding edge of the clay didjeridoo. It consists of a turned bowl whose edge I have cut up into nibs of different lengths, and on every nib turned out a sharp edge for bowing. It has turned out to function better as a percussion instrument, though.

I also wanted to make a didjeridoo with the possibility of playing polyphonic and melodic music. The *double trumpet* is a result; it works, but not as it was meant to (with circular breathing). However, it does have some advantages besides looking funny. (8)

When I heard that every string in the piano is under the tension corresponding to about 70 kilos, I imagined a man hanging in every string, and that was not very far from actually mounting a model in the ceiling of the workshop, with stirrups in the lower end of two strings. A stool was made into a resonator, with the same kind of loop bridges as on the butter bass (two of them) through the seat.

To hold the vertical resonator up and in tension, standing in these *stringed stirrups*, I first tried fastening my belt around the resonator and the chest and leaning backwards. The firmness of this belt was overrated, but the inglorious fall into the floor was documented on tape and has given me many good laughs afterwards. Later, I found out a way of fastening a strap around resonator and shoulders without everything gliding downwards into a cluster. Playing became comfortable and liberated both hands and four sounding string lengths for bowing, and beating with specially made felt- and skin-covered blocks. With a contact microphone, the floating, long-ringing, thundering bass tones and intense, whistling overtones come out clearly. Vibrato and pitch change can be achieved by displacing the weight between the feet. From the Opera terrace in Stockholm I also developed longitudinal vibrations - the hanging length was over 7 meters! These shockingly strong tones were made by rubbing along the strings with rosined pieces of cloth. (9) The thickness of the piano wires are 1.5 and 1.0 mm, which makes a pitch difference of a fifth if the tensions and lengths are equal. For safety, I climb and play the instrument with protective goggles, which might be unnecessary, but the astronaut- or frogman-like appearance at a performance I think is rather desirable. The spotlight ladder I mounted the instrument in at Unga Atalante in Göteborg (Gothenburg) formed a triangular room which related me back to childhood obsessions: vehicles, outer space, climbing, circus, diving, aquarium.

In two dreams I actually also have returned to the water with music: in one I took a bath and played on the bathtub and the water in a duo with saxophone player Evan Parker; in the other I sat on the bottom of the sea and played the saw. The marvellous deep and long sound that this produced naturally inspired me to make



Bergmark playing the Stringed Stirrups or Angel Strings. Photo © by Gudrun Edel-Rösnes.

experiments awake, in bathtub and pool, with specially constructed water-resistant bows (and after persuading the suspicious bath attendants). I saw before me concerts in swimming-baths for a snorkeled audience, and in dolphin pools with underwater windows - what would whales think about saw music, which can be so similar to their own singing (and what do they think about underwater musicians)? But the ring was difficult to produce and was in addition rapidly deadened by the water - which will provide the fertile soil for new solutions ... large-sized metal sheets cemented firmly to the bottom, so that the musician must swim with webbed feet to bend them? (10)



A closer look at the instrument.

My friend Petra Mandal had a dream about an instrument that I have now started to make, the *stringed coffin*: a box in body length contains the musician, and some strings are strung over the lid. Through a little hole, the musician sings and the voice directs the tones of the strings. (11)



The Stringed Coffin. (Model by Petra Mandal.)



Playing the Finger Violin. Photo © by Greg Locke, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.

The *finger violin* consists of two wooden laminae in the form of flat violin soundboards with five piano strings drawn through them, stretched between the fingers (who are attached to the ends through rings), and the back plate, locked behind the back and left arm. The strings, being so stiff, cannot be tightened enough by the fingers to make a clear fundamental tone, so the sound consists primarily of rumbling, creaking and overtone whistling, which is very effective with a contact microphone. Sometimes it sounds like a terror-struck choir when I bow a cluster on all strings. Other sounds can be achieved if you play on the edge of the lid with the bow, the teeth or anything, or shake the bow between the strings. Pizzicato also works, of course. An interesting sound is also the amplified putting on and pulling off of the instrument.

The violin form of the wooden laminae in the finger violin is not acoustically motivated, but a purely scenic point, which made me excited to research the scenic side of the musical performance more, especially in my solo playing. For many audiences, this side is more important than the musical one! I also started to mix with poetry, acting and objects in my concerts.

My first electric instrument, which also has some electro-acoustic possibilities, turned out to be a celebration of the 80th anniversary of the first *ready-made* by Marcel Duchamp: "bicycle wheel" from 1913 (which I was unaware of - just like I was unaware of that it was the 100th anniversary of the Ferris Wheel). It is a copy of the same constellation of a bicycle wheel sitting on the front fork stuck through the seat of a kitchen stool, with one important addition: it still has the dynamo left. I attached the electric wires to a plug and could bring out the unadulterated sound of the power generator through loudspeakers. It is a very strong signal which put an end to a fuse in my stereo at first attempt. Later, when I made a parallel coupling with the sound signal and the attached bicycle lights, the sound signal was relieved a bit, and at the same time I got a nice light effect when playing on the dynamo! One acoustic possibility is to play the spokes, e.g. with a double bow - two violin bows put together with the horsehair in different directions (which I made to play two saws at the same time). Another possibility is to let the spinning spokes strike different materials. A contact microphone in the hub even amplifies details like the scraping of a comb on the fork. I also added a table-lamp spring in the wheel which gives a bass drone and various scraping. The name of this instrument is *Veloncell Marcel*.



The Veloncell Marcel.



The Brillolin.

The *Brillolin* is a further development of the hedgehog. The fingerholder is here formed like a miniature violin, where the protruding part, in two "floors" from top and bottom, comes from where the violin neck would be (later, the upper floor broke). Instead of wooden sticks, there are pieces of piano wire coming out, and additionally, two strings are placed between fingerholder and an empty pair of glasses that the musician wears on his or her face. ("Briller" means glasses in Norwegian.) The origins of the instrument is the finding of the empty glasses, which I thought had a comical quality which ought to be used in an instrument.

On an abandoned industry I found 22 well sounding lamp-shades of glass. I took them home, sorted them according to pitch, and made a simple stand for these *glass shade bells* with 6 shades. Unfortunately, the 22 rapidly turned out to reduce its number during transportations, so not many extras remain today.



The Lamp Shade Bells.

My repertoire of over 30 instruments and sound tools lead to a puttering about that I want to alter with a kind of one-man band which combines bowed idiophones (saw and bowed sheet and rods of metal and wood), strings, percussion and wind instruments. I have continuously revised the outline of this instrument, till I made a full-size cardboard model and gave it the name *crow castle*.

In a dream, I have now seen a flute which is also a two-stringed bowed instrument. The finger board of the string instrument coincides with the body of the flute. A normal descending scale on the flute would result in an ascending one on the string instrument! A related bass version with a plastic tube didjeridoo and strings waits to be made.

In waked state, I have approached the road to the one-man band by playing several instruments at once: didjeridoo, piano and saw; two saws at once; finger violin and stringed stirrups etc.

Another of my waiting projects will be to build a boat that can hang freely in the air in piano wires, e.g. under bridges. The musician will stand in the hanging boat. This vision might have been inspired by my childhood reading of Jules Verne's *Lord of the Air*.



Here I am trying out a cardboard model of the "Crow Castle". Photo © Hans Einar Nerland.

* * *

3. Death of prejudice.

This story is not finished - I collect and search for sounds everywhere; look for, meet and read about instrument inventors; try the sound potential of lamp-shades, household utensils, tools, pots, balloons, junk and body parts; bang, rub, knock, sing through time and matter. I feel closer to my nature, and to nature, in irregular rhythms, uncertain pitches, uncontrollable timbres and indefinable squeaking - but also with variations, contrasts against these. All or no sounds are strange or unusual - but only some have the character of discovery or revelation - what interests, inspires me most is the communication, identity, truth, openness with the context in which I meet the sound. I sometimes feel richer when I am not the whole factor of power, in the encounter with image, word, others playing or dancing, in a bigger context.

To be able to improvise freely and communicate with other musicians in the moment, it helps to leave behind sounds that tend to refer to an inner structural hierarchy, such as functional tonal harmony and regular rhythm. These willingly demand their own attention. To completely leave their commonly prevailing supremacy leaves the musicians naked in front of each other with their bodies' impulsive life and leaps between strength, weakness, rest and intensity. To leave the traditionally goal-oriented drama with its one-way time sequence demands an electric attention to the whole rather than on one's own part, which almost automatically seems to lead to short, fast contributions, pauses and sharp changes. The better the communication, the bigger the tension and unpredictability, since the intensive listening automatically opens for the inexhaustible curiosity and desire to experiment which is always brooding behind the "presentable". "Communication" is in this case something other than "dialogue" or "conversation". A better simile would be that every participating musician and sound are poetical elements that connect sparks between each other in analogies, above the logic of the conversation. I conceive this as a surrealist state of mind.

To present a sound drama with a predetermined solution through functional tonal harmony or regular rhythm is what is usually identified as music. Without openness for crime, this corresponds to a way of thinking which grants the highest value to the functional and regular. The reaction of fear and repression against threatening crisis is to confront chaos with order. What is needed of the human spirit and body is to confront the orders of realism and adjustment with inspired and unbridled chaos, but *also* to try new and other orders - orders that arise *from* the chaos that human *desire* at the first glance seems to be. Both of these ways have been opened in music by e.g. free improvisation and instrument invention. This is not something new but has always been the case, before the music became ordered, in the now prevailing sense of "composed" - but the sight has often been dimmed by musicians having become content with, or found honor in, style making, fame or positions. There is no unified movement and there is no purity in any sense. Every honest and curious musician is a lonely example: François Bayle, Anthony Braxton, John Coltrane, Sven-Åke Johansson, Spike Jones, Thomas Magee, Phil Minton, Conlon Nancarrow, Hal Rammel, Jon Rose, Giacinto Scelsi, LaDonna Smith, Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor, Karl-Erik Welin, Christian Werner, Lasse Werner or Davey Williams (to just

mention a few of those standing close enough to me or at a far distance enough) ... in relation to each other very different in temperament, style (and fame) but all alike in their release of strong powers of chaos from which new poetic orders arise, orders that show that not only music but all life can be lived in so many more, and more beautiful ways than what the law and habit command.

Footnotes:

1. The didjeridoo is a piece of a branch hollowed out by termites, adjusted in the mouthpiece and painted. The gopychand (also called ektara) has one string ending on a tuning pin where the legs meet in the top of a forked neck, and the other string end in the middle of a drum skin. As you squeeze the neck, the pitch goes down. The Bengal bauls pluck it as they sing. I usually play it with a bow.
2. This instrument, though of the same size as the gopychand and with the same name (or gopijantra, oop-goopi) actually exists in Bengal, I later discovered! They hold the resonator under the arm and pluck the string with a plectrum.
3. This inverse bridge also exists in the musical bow berimbau.
4. A playing technique that was also used on the tromba marina.
5. Like the baya, the lower one of the Indian drum pair tablas. As an instrument, it would be related to other friction drums as the cuica or rommel pot.
6. I am not alone in this discovery: since it was made, I have seen Swedish/German percussionist, accordionist and poet Sven-Åke Johansson do similar things, and the German Hans Reichel has earlier developed the idea into his daxophon. Many percussionists also use a bow on cymbals, vibraphone or bells. The saw, the most distinguished of bowed idiophones, was already known to me.
7. E.g. the triolin and the aerolin, in the tradition of the "nail harmonica" and the Waterphone (of Richard Waters). See e.g. Rammel's essay "Instrument Invention and Sound Exploration" in "The Man in the Street - translations of some writings by surrealists in Swedish", Surrealistförlaget, Stockholm, and his articles in EMI.
8. Double wind instruments is a very old idea, e.g. the ancient Greek aulos, Yugoslavian and native American flutes, and of course the bagpipe and the organ. Roland Kirk was one of the foremost in double - and triple - saxophone playing (with circular breathing, too!). But I actually don't know of double trumpets, before Hal Rammel's report of having seen Lester Bowie and another one that have played two trumpets at once.
9. Long strings and their longitudinal vibrations have been used by many artists and musicians, e.g. Ellen Fullman, but playing on strings that you are hanging in yourself I have never heard of before.
10. I have come across several water-based instruments, and water drums and water flutes moreover, do have some history. Many have communicated with whales, e.g. dolphins and killer whales, with music played through underwater loudspeakers. Very few instruments that I've heard of, are supposed to be able to be played under the water: the waterphone and the dolphin sticks. The whalesinger drum is played floating but intended to be heard by whales. (See EMI vol VI #4.)
11. How to solve this technicality remains, but I am thinking about the idea of electromagnets driving the strings, directed by signals from a microphone by the mouth. It is problematic, though: German instrument inventor and composer Volker Staub informed me of someone who has tried electromagnetic steering of string vibrations: when the amplitude of the string becomes too big, the string suddenly gets stuck to the magnet with a bang.

NOTE: Another article was planned to be parts from a Nordic Instrument Inventors' Dictionary, to be published in Experimental Musical Instruments, the best source on Instrument Inventions (now closed down). EMI also edited yearly cassettes. A lot is still for sale.

The only journal exclusively on free improvisation is The Improvisor.

For my own music, see my [discography](#).

Johannes Bergmark
Contact (Bergmark).
This page updated the 11th of April, 2012.

[Home](#) - [Texts](#) - [Galleries](#) - [Other media](#) - [Links](#) - [Contact](#)

improvisation, listening

by Dave Knott

2004

the following essay is a personal, historical, explanatory account of how I have come to improvise music using stringboards, what I am currently doing with it and where I hope to go with it. while not exhaustive, seeks to provide a context for how it plays in life as I perceive it.

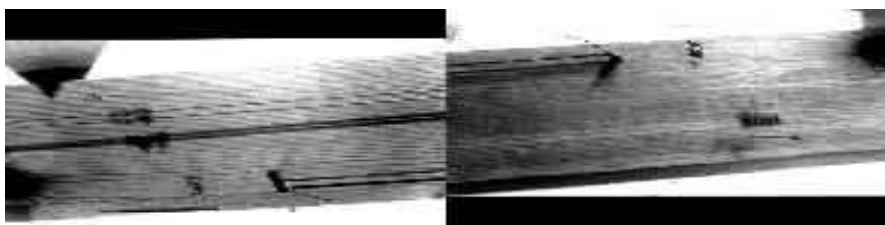
It feels most natural to share this information in three voices. Each voice is an important part and it may be easier for a reader to frame the perspectives as separate. Therefore, each voice will be presented in its own font. The three fonts are:

Courier. This font carries text from the music therapy journal, a notebook from a student of music therapy who seeks to use latent musical talents to promote healing and growth. Sadly, it must also occasion to contain those sometime short falling attempts to describe the change that music can bring.

Georgia: The fool, j e s t e r..doesn't care to write complete sentences or even spell or punctuate correctly. Irresponsible by most "moral" standards and a complete amateur, truly too because he has no interest in anything but the sound of love -

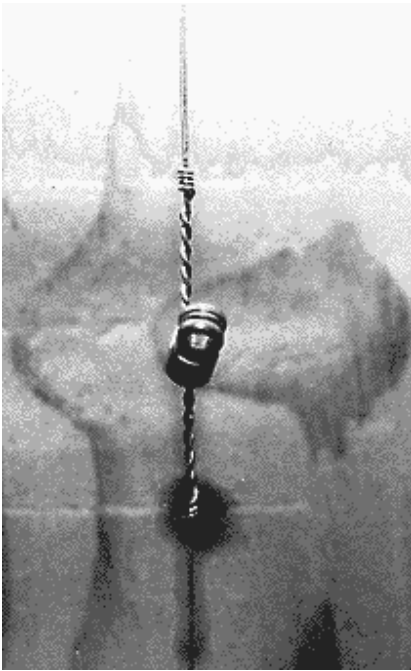
Its many expressions in sound.

Chicago: The regulator, facilitator, the one trying to pull the group together. As the narrator, this font synthesizes and organizes the persona in some hopeful hope that any bit will make sense at all, much less some complex system of analyzing ideas and actions.



stringboardall
are by **Caterina de Carlo**photos

A vibrating string is truly a wonder. Plucked, bowed, strummed, slapped, touched, licked, dragged across the floor... We've all witnessed varied musical actions upon strings - and listened to the resultant tones. The resonance of vibrating strings comes from many variables including the weight and shape of the string and the material.



dkott, vibrating string

Internal, appreciable processes such as proper functioning of the ears (mechanical and neural) and psychological processing of auditory information as well as musical preferences of the listener and mental set all effect how one perceives sound. It is in this processing that the knowledge and inquiry of aesthetic and creative experience reside.

Improvising with sound has been of great interest for nearly all my life. Early memories of playing with parts of junk cars in my grandfather's salvage yard and tapping on and hollering into drainage pipes on the St. Mary's River remind me of this perpetual fascination with making sound and listening to it. I started playing guitar in 1981 and was the most at ease with it when plunking, picking, poking at it to see what sounds we could make together--free playing. Of course I wanted to learn how to "play" it so I bought the magazines, tablature books, took lessons when I could and went on to study classical and jazz guitar in college. All along I felt a sort of division between the free playing I did on my own and the music I did for class or performance--reserved playing. It wasn't until moving to Seattle in 1991 that I began to find individuals who embraced the presentation of their own free play as a performance medium. That was very exciting. Still though, I often found in free improvisation with others a resurfacing of that reserved mind.

I decided that I wanted to go a bit deeper into sound construction and in August 1994, I enrolled in the Roberto-Venn School of Luthiery. There I built a redwood/mahogany classical guitar, a fretless electric guitar and an electric bass. What I witnessed at R-V that was the most moving was recognizing music coming from the raw materials before the guitars were ever built. That was a profound discovery for me.

Upon returning to Seattle, I worked making harps and dulcimers at Dusty Strings Company and began playing more and more with musicians in the free way and in 1997, I began playing every Thursday night with Jeph Jerman and Aaron Wintersong at the Anomalous records performance space.

in that sense the growing, freedom to move without fear.. knowing a vigil has been set. a day of play and nothing but. repetition, cylindrical pulse, a frequency in time we rode.. that may be a key in the interaction



During this time I had access to a wood shop and was experimenting with attaching strings to pieces of found plywood--really a combination of an interest in finding new sounds and an obsession with putting strings on boards and manipulating/attaching/preparing the strings in ways that made very un-string like sounds--strings tied together, strings joined by springs, plucking, strumming and bowing as well as using percussive techniques and the application of secondary materials such as rocks from the parking lot, sticks and twigs as bridges, *door knobs* as bridges.. Exploring with my woodshop mate Peter Bonnell, we discovered a simple and astounding preparation by using ball-end guitar strings, one threaded through the end of the other.

Acoustic deviations of the string--material composition, length, its resonating surface (soundboard), and the properties of the space in which it is played (acoustics and noise)--effect the quality of the string's tone. When the composition of the string is altered or manipulated, such as introducing an object onto the string (Cowell, Cage), altering or building the instrument to affect the string (Partch), or using specialized techniques to elicit string

vibration (Fullman), new sonorities are evoked. These sonorities may lead listeners to different experiences than the traditional sounding of strings.

the boards and strings, found things, but played with care and appreciation. a wall of sound hanging suspended upended process of reward and freedom, perception - interpretation



Wall of Sound installation: Seattle, Washington

Anomalous' owner Erik Lanzillotta asked if I would make an installation of stringboards and I gladly agreed. Strings of all manner mounted to collected pieces of wood provided the primary materials for its construction. Unassisted stringboard making requires certain physiological skills such as gross and fine motor skills. Carefully guiding and turning a tuning pin into place is a complex task requiring hand-eye coordination, depth perception, sense of self in space, and other physiological skills. In addition to physiological skills, psychological skills are developed such as attention and focus, problem solving, aesthetics, formulating opinions and acting upon them, self development, and growth.

By mounting the boards to the wall, the wall became a secondary resonator for the instruments--in effect the room became the instrument. Putting strings on the walls was born of this weekly conspiracy. A gathering of wills to conspire a unity of expressed sounds. (Clicks, sproinks, booweeps, and puuouush's abound played across into and with everyone else, everything else).

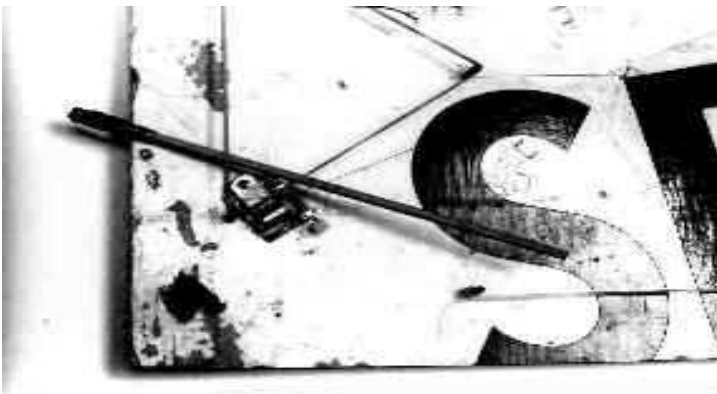
Placed on one's head or across body parts, I can feel the pulse of the vibrations setting in sympathy parts of my body--I begin vibrating with the string, just like the wall did.



I was also interested in a tuning system based upon an individual's subjective experience of when the string in question "sounds" properly tuned. This engages the tuner to listen to that string on that piece of wood and focus their attention on the resonance of that moment.

Tuning:

Listening to the sound of the string, I tune each one to its most clean and projecting resonance. The prepared strings, ball-end style, seem to have a range of tension where the sound is most brilliant. When plucked it produces a mysterious cymbal or bell like sound rich in harmonics. As two strings are used, often two different fundamental tones are produced in the single vibrating length. The combination of tones and overtones playing with itself is both chaotic and natural sounding.



Stringboards are tuned according to the tuner's discretion, listening carefully for each string's most appreciated resonance. Above all else, string preparations require a player to observe and act, tuning to enough tightness to make it sound yet not so much that it breaks. This is a high functioning, fine motor task that requires the participant to involve themselves aesthetically. Since there is no prescribed pitch for tuning, only an aesthetic quality of resonance, the participant must engage themselves in an active way. In addition

to the tension part of tuning is preparing the string: How long it will be? What combination of gauge and string type are to be used?

These types of actions - musical action - require creativity, decision - making, and expressions of self. By listening for the desired tone while adjusting the tension of the string, a participant is engaging gross and fine motor and coordination skills as well as making aesthetic decisions about when they feel the string is most resonant.

Declaring ANY sound to be the most resonant is a statement of self, an expression of belief. Meaning is given to the tuned string in the form of appreciation and action.



As we played every Thursday night at the same location, I became more aware of the sound of the city; an opening or deeper perception of the environment came into focus. The ding and tick of the crossing bell, screeching and rushing autos, clattering passersby. More than one person wandered into the session, and helped themselves to the instruments. ON many levels, it seemed as though at our best our playing was a genuine accompaniment to the sound of the environment. The environment pressed into the music--demanded its space--our attention.

And at my best feeling they and it playing me--have been reclaimed by the moment, surrendered to sound.

"Then there is the whole branch of exploring acoustic phenomenon."

In July 1997, Erik Lanzillotta recorded the installation. A compact disc culled from that recording has now been released on Anomalous Records. The improvisation in full length provides a proper context for any one, isolated passage. When does sound, (nature) become

perceived as music? When does one sound impress us with its presence while others pass by so unnoticed? How do we represent an entire sky with snapshots? What part of the presence of a musical experience can be recorded?

I decided to go study music therapy and got accepted by Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. I was there for two years intensely studying music therapy and during this time Eric and I worked on the process of getting the cd together. Very little composition was done to the material, mostly reduction of a 90 minute cassette recording to 73 minutes so it remains roughly as a document of improvisation and in this way reflects the listening that went on during the play at Anomalous. In addition, the cd presented an opportunity to collaborate with a dear old friend who happens to be an amazing realist painter, Russell W. Gordon. Russ wanted to make an original for the cd and I couldn't have been happier.



I am currently getting started with an internship in music therapy using music to help individuals with HIV related health problems. Relaxation, orientation to reality, and issues related to death and dying are areas of focus for the use of music in this context. I've been using classical guitar (classical literature and improvisation) and am having success. As I become more comfortable with the setting and the residents more comfortable with me, I hope to involve the stringboards in the process.

I have found a therapeutic context for the stringboards in my work with a 33 year old artist who sustained a brain injury in 1993. Besides singing, toning, and songwriting, we make stringboards together. First we find a suitable piece, he paints it then I install the tuning pins and string it up. We have begun creating soundscapes of the creative process by attaching a contact microphone to the board while he is painting and I am preparing. This forces us to work with a greater degree of interaction and cooperation and provides us with auditory feedback of what we are doing.

My plans now are to complete my internship and take the board examinations to become a Certified Music Therapist. After that, I intend to build a stringed treehouse listening sanctuary.

Since I started putting strings on hunks of wood and hearing these wonderful sounds, I've felt that the stringboard itself as an object is of secondary value, its primary purpose is directing a listener's attention to the musical qualities of sound. And (finally) beginning to recognize the importance of environment on musical experience, I feel it necessary to head up into the trees with these ideas, strings and ears.

-dave knott

Styles and Goals

2004

by
Greg Segal

Improvisation in different styles generally proceeds towards different but similar goals- with the common goal of artistic freedom and celebration of chance being at the root in most cases. Jazz improvisation seems to center around technique and theory being put to the test under fire; classical avant-garde improvisation is often engaged in a similar but wider exploration in which theory and sonic structural boundaries are expanded in search of more answers to the question, "What is music?" (Some of the more progressive jazz and rock appear to be equally concerned with this question.)

Improvisation in a rock context seems usually to be more about the concert being an event, especially if the artist is (or was) big. From the musician's standpoint, however- and this is true in any of the forms mentioned above- there is the much simpler explanation that improvisation is a whole lot of fun for them. And on a good night the audience digs it too.

(If I appear to be hedging in the above paragraph- seems, appears, etc.- it's because analysis can only go so far with art and there are at least as many answers and as many questions as there are artists. Analysis of the arts can never escape being general and presumptive. So I will at least try to let the

language show that.)

Beyond Form: Improvisation as an element

On a more subtle level, improvisation is spread throughout all forms, if seen as a matter of degree. Working towards structure from total free improvisation we can take a few examples and see: improvisation within a simple framework- head, improv, and tail; improvisation only in the context of solos, with the rest of the piece carefully constructed; and finally, improvisation on the smallest degree- the difference between performances of fully composed pieces. The most competent musician will of course never be able to play the same piece in exactly the same way regardless of effort to do so. There are too many variables- intonation, attack, vibrato, and all the things which physically affect a performer's skill with these. So is this actually improvisation? Yes, insofar as any performer must adapt to physical and mental conditions in order to perform, and those conditions can never be the same twice. In this way every performer must interact with the moment- regardless of how pre-structured a piece is- in order to play well. And that is the essence of improvisation. So what we are dealing with here is actually a root element that can be elevated, evolving into many forms and used in virtually every context.

The Controlled Accident

I first came across this concept in 1981 in an Asian Cultures course, in connection with Japanese pottery and Zen philosophy. Basically, the idea is this: if there are cracks in the fired piece, you work with them, incorporating them into the original design. They can become flowers, vines, whatever they might suggest to the artist. And a piece in which this was done well is considered even more beautiful than one that has turned out "perfectly".

You can see how this ties in well with music. First, most players have experienced those moments on stage where it is vital to turn a mistake in

one's favor- the controlled accident in spades. However, a great many people raised in our culture will fail to see the beauty in this. I think that has to do with cultural conditioning- mistakes aren't OK, they aren't something that happens to everyone. Performers are supposed to be infallible, damn it! So, there's no gentle sense of humor that allows one to marvel at the recovery. The players I've met over the years seem to fall into two camps- those who get this and those who don't. The ones who don't seem to have a lot in common with religious fundamentalists and tend to be more restricted (and restrictive) in other areas of their life as well. There is no separating personality from art! (Or any other human activity for that matter.) The clash is usually one of form vs. feeling. It's my opinion that in the highest art there is no clash between these two, but instead an integration. Almost everyone will agree with this but almost no one agrees on the ratio!

Second, I have found the controlled accident concept very useful when creating recorded music. When doing multiple tracks for a composed piece, I will almost certainly do unplanned things along the way- different notes, spontaneous flights of inflection, etc. And in the successive tracks, I will play off of these, sometimes changing the entire feel of the piece in ways ranging from subtle to blatant. Sometimes these experiments are a success and sometimes they are not. But I have found that the surprises- to me, the composer- are usually both great fun and a real learning experience. If you have something very, very specific in mind, then such surprises aren't welcome. But on the whole, I think to deny oneself the joy and learning opportunity out of a misguided loyalty to supposed perfection, is conservative to the point of being pathological. It's an excellent skill-builder on one end of the spectrum, but to have a full experience in music I believe you must develop skills of the moment as well. It's enriching both as a musician and as a human being.

An extreme form of using the controlled accident in recording is to multi-track free improvisation. Lay down the first one, and then react to it in successive tracks. The options, paradoxically, may be viewed as both increasing and decreasing with each successive track. Increasing because

there are more sounds to play off of; and decreasing for the same reason! How you view the situation and react to it will depend largely on your ideas about arrangement.

Improvisation in Life

Well, you can't get around it, can you? The bottom line here is that you can't plan everything. Most people recognize this and try to structure their lives to exclude as much of the random as they can. This does not prepare them for when random things do occur- as they inevitably will. It would be better to do much the same thing- keep things reasonably well controlled- but with an acknowledgment of the random, backed up with some kind of training for dealing with it. This doesn't mean training so that you can try to get everything strictly nailed down- do that and joy, which is spontaneous, all but disappears. Whatever training is used should include a view of the random as enjoyable, and direct people towards an acceptance of its beauty. For the most part its' negative aspects get the publicity, and it is treated with fear and distrust. This is a societal, cultural prejudice. While it is not entirely without basis, it is not, in my opinion, the healthiest approach to a very basic fact of life.

I have found that playing improvised music is very good training for this. Initially it may be more a matter of tendency than training; I had always been inclined towards creating things on the spot and acting in the moment, long before I ever considered becoming a musician. However I believe that this way of thinking can and should be exposed to everyone as a viable approach to life, regardless of natural inclination, and hopefully developed to some extent. Sports develops it and is probably the most common and culturally accepted method for achieving some degree of facility in dealing with the random. A player who can't think and act in the moment won't be much of a player. Watching sports heightens cultural appreciation of the random and playing them heightens skill in dealing with it. But sports are surrounded by their own particular type of cultural baggage- of a type, in fact which more often than not trains hostility to the acceptance of the unknown- and unfortunately the positive message of interaction with

randomness frequently gets buried, overlooked, or simply does not get translated to the rest of life. Sports are sports, life is life, and what the hell kind of music is that you're playing?

I am not suggesting that people whose natural inclinations are towards the structured should be forced to live in a world of chaos. I believe people should discover which way they lean and go with that, but not give themselves over to it completely. Whatever their tendency, it should be tempered to a beneficial degree by its opposite, again through training or exposure. Unfortunately for those whose tendencies are naturally more inclined towards the spontaneous than the pre-structured, I think overall this culture views that as aberrant. That's not only a shame, it's a waste of natural resources! People perform best for the culture and humanity in general when working primarily with, not against, their own tendencies.

Everyone should be encouraged in the opportunity of developing the capacity for celebrating the positive aspects of randomness, as well as taught to fear its dark, unknown and dangerous aspect. Improvised music is a pretty benign means of learning that. It's a good way to safely explore the full range of possibilities for interaction with the random. At its most dangerous it is only as harmful as the idea of freedom. ~

3/12/00

About the author: Greg Segal was the guitarist with Paper Bag, an improvisational band who released 4 albums for SST records during the 80s. He has also worked with many other improvisation-based acts, and has recorded solo composed material. Currently he is doing solo shows of experimental guitar, and recording new music with Paper Bag, Jugabandi and Marc Mylar. He can also be seen playing drums for Antiworld, a punk band who play songs related to all aspects of horror. For more information on Greg Segal and all related projects, go to his home page, Phantom Airship.

www.spiritone.com/~gsmulti/webwork/GSHP

ARTIST LETTER TO REVIEWER ..

Response in defense of "process oriented" work
to the Arts reviewer of *The Birmingham News*

b y S u s a n H e f n e r

2004

Dear Ms. Raabe,

I've been thinking about your dislike of the piece I choreographed last summer, *Forest Rising*, which you called a questionable use of state funds. I think the dialogue surrounding this issue is important, so I've decided to share the history and purpose of the piece with you. With a little more information perhaps you'll find some answers to your questioning.

I grew up in Birmingham, and I love the people there very much, especially the artists. I decided to choreograph *Forest Rising* after noticing very few people of color involved in the annual improvisation festival. I've been casually mentioning that things weren't right to the other participants for a couple of years, my old friends there, and the organizers. Some people gave feeble excuses that black artists are trained differently, wouldn't be interested, etc. Others really wanted things to change, but just didn't know how to go about instigating more interaction between people of different backgrounds.

I set out to change this, by choreographing a piece for 10 dancers in a special outdoor site: some foundation ruins at Sloss Furnaces National

Historic Landmark. I decided to make the piece itself about overcoming oppression, and make special efforts to recruit black dancers. I figured in representing cooperation and community, we'd have to literally create close relationships in our own group. My main goal was for people to make friends cross-race and include each other in future projects. I prepared for a year, calling up people, getting the sponsorship of the Birmingham Art Association and Sloss Furnaces. I made myself a five-week residency in which to create the piece, and absented myself from my work in New York completely unpaid.

My dear dancer friend and cohort, Leah Chevalier, went with me as assistant director. Leah is an ace dancer of African heritage. We were ideal allies for the project in Birmingham, which brought up huge feelings for both of us about battling racism. We didn't think it would be easy.

One of the first obstacles I had to overcome was the skepticism of whites about the project. They waffled more about joining the project than people of color. I think the prospect of confronting their own racism, and working closely with people of color was terrifying. When I advertised the audition as being for dancers of all ethnic backgrounds, even one white dance leader who was trying to be supportive referred to my project as being for non-dancers.

Gathering the cast took effort. I made personal appointments, worked around people's schedules with childcare, and made contact by phone and mail with community dance teachers explaining my project and point of view in a straightforward way. I explained the necessity of having an audition: to

see the dancers' strengths and be assured they would be safe in the demanding environment, and for them to audition me, see my methods and decide if they would like to work with me. I apologized for the low pay and assured them of my great respect for artists and my efforts on their behalf to secure funding in what is an irrational and non-workable system.

Sitting in a circle, we introduced ourselves, said where we were born and raised, and what we love about dancing. I figured being dancers would be a natural point of solidarity. I had them break into small groups of 3 or 4 to solve a movement problem together improvisationally, to give me a chance to see how well they listened to each other's input and cooperated in a group process. At the end I started a trend we kept all month: I asked each person to mention things they enjoyed about the evening and to say something appreciative about the person on their left. I explained how as artists we're generally real hard on ourselves because the society perpetuates harsh criticism, and that this would help. This practice set the tone for a supportive, safe environment.

I picked the people who seemed like they had the best shot at working well together for the project 7 people of color and 4 whites, with a 32-year age span. Brandon, age 14, is a student at Alabama School of Fine Arts. He and his two 16- year-old friends Alexis and Vanessa, who were also in the cast, praise-dance together at their church. Lavondia leads an African dance troupe and teaches at Miles College; Mishra, Kristin, and Mary dance with Southern Danceworks (Mary is the former director); Deborah teaches at the University of Montevallo. Ginger produces local variety shows, and is

an improviser from way back. I invented a narrator role for Neko, an experienced performance artist. Leisha, a local poet, (and college professor) wrote the text.

In the 2nd rehearsal I gave them instructions for sharing 5-minute listening sessions in pairs, which we continued to do every rehearsal from then on. They took turns listening to each other with complete respect and without interrupting, as a way of clearing their minds for the rehearsal process, and to practice listening to another artist the way they need to listen to themselves: non-judgmentally, so their ideas as improvisers and collaborators would be free to flow. This idea was based upon my work as a teacher of Re-evaluation Counseling, which is an organization for world change using listening skills. "RC" ideas inform my work's liberation theory content, as well as its' process, and listening is a large part of what we do.

The listening time was by far the most popular part of rehearsal. People complained when it was over; depicted it as the best part of their week; spontaneously asked if it could be confidential the 2nd week; and some people began to express emotion in their sessions soon after. I had them change partners for the listening each time, so everyone would get to know everyone. Around the second week, Mishra commented she already knew this group better than she knew the members of her other dance troupe after working with them for two years. A little listening goes a long way. Four of the dancers, who are also choreographers, eventually began to use the listening process in their own work as well, and reported good results.

Early on in the rehearsal process, I set up an improv in which they were to enter the performance space by climbing over a wall and appearing one by one. On their own, they appeared in their societal pecking order: most experienced white dance leader first, youngest female person of color last. I was disappointed, but had to face the fact my cast simply didn't have the information they needed to do things differently. I wanted to make people more aware without blaming people or kicking up enormous self-hatred and shame, and move things forward for a group that basically has had very little opportunity to do identity work.

I tried some things. I gave a little talk about oppression the class system, our natural tendency to be close and cooperate, how we're fed misinformation about other groups, the divide and conquer strategy. How our making friends and creating a work together is a way to fight that, and is significant. I gave a local example: in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, there are laws from the 40's and 50's displayed outlawing people of different races from playing cards together, playing softball together, being seen in the same restaurant, etc, among countless other things. These were the harsh strictures devised for keeping us apart, and it took harsh strictures because our natural tendency is to be close.

Everyone was stone still during my talk. I think it brought up huge feelings of terror and rage, usually kept carefully concealed in Birmingham polite society. Although it seemed to paralyze people, I thought at least I've openly stated where I'm coming from. Someone later referred to class oppression in a way that showed she very much understood that talk. But I

decided to try concentrating more on their actual relationships from then on, instead of talking more about oppression.

During improvisations set up to gather choreography, the younger people of color looked a little lost, while the more experienced folks looked like they weren't exactly working together to create something. They were in competition to see who could come up with the best dance moves, the most daredevil use of the space, etc. Maybe they thought there would be "stars" that got all the good roles, and the rest would blend in as chorus, as in the classical (and classist) dance tradition. To clear that up, I explained the piece was about cooperation and community, that each person is valued for her or his unique contribution, and that I would make sure each person had something special to do based on her special qualities. I see my job as choreographer to get to know and draw out each person's skills.

Then I consulted each teenager, and asked him or her to pick a buddy from the experienced folk. I encouraged them to put themselves in the center of each improv, told them everything they did was visible and important, and suggested anytime they felt lost or "out of it" they could grab their buddy, ask questions, or connect physically. The older buddies were honored to be asked, and reassured at having their skills recognized. Thinking about a young person as we did stuff helped them begin thinking about the well-being of the group as a whole. Things seemed to relax after that. It was a definite turning point.

In forming the actual structure of the choreography in my mind, I thought of how to use people's skills, what would challenge each person, and what

would be the opposite of where they struggle as people. I structured a loose through-line about a band of people who traveled from far away, escaped from an oppressive, irrational society, (ours) and camped out in the burned-out forest environment for a time to put their heads together and come up with some rational plans for a better society. I had gymnastic Mishra appear first as the scout, climbing, perching and scanning the landscape from the top of a tall column. The others entered, helping each other over the wall, and ate, slept, dreamed transcendent dreams, worked, hunted, fought, listened to each other, fell in love, played, perched on the top of the monoliths as birds, and flew away transformed. I put in lots of contact, tenderness and lifts so they would physically and psychically have to rely on each other. I gave a woman who has been hurt by the "mental health" system and left feeling passive a dance of anger, release and healing. I gave Lavondia a tree to plant and a dance of growth to show her spiritual side. Mary represented greed, stole oranges, became isolated and was eventually welcomed back into the group. Young Alexis stopped a chaotic fight, emerging as a powerful leader. Brandon and Ginger had a shy, tender duet representing overcoming racism.

The music was composed after the piece was structured, and performed live by four improvising musicians on violin, viola, voice, guitar, cello and percussion. It had elements of Klezmer, medieval and ancient music, and Eastern European influences. The dancers sang around a group campfire scene, as well, in strong, clear, well-harmonized voices.

In the final 2 weeks of the process the cast grew closer although I wasn't

able to give them any more direct attention around their relationships; I was too busy choreographing, leading music rehearsals, editing the text, helping paint costumes, and trying to make ends meet financially. I was honest about my struggles in the listening time I shared with them I remained just another human being like them in spite of being the designated leader, and delegated as much responsibility as I could to them. As the show approached and people got scared, patterns of bossiness and urgency began to come out toward each other. They were showing how much they cared about the piece, too. I told them it was nice to care about the piece so much, but our relationships actually come first, because they will continue. I asked each person to choose someone they'd like to get closer to, and say why.

Showtime came; the dancers were beautiful. They meshed as a cohesive group and really threw themselves into the performances with total commitment. I was sweating in the pit with the four musicians, calling cues, setting tempos and assisting with percussion. We sold out, even though people had initially expressed concern I would stage a dance show three nights running in Birmingham; we had to turn people away. The audiences were very moved. Some people cried; a black minister said she was going to base her next sermon on it.

Maybe I shouldn't have been surprised when you, Nancy, a conservative white critic, panned Forest Rising. I've never seen a worse review; it was almost laughable. It belittled the piece, and sarcastically praised the fine view of passing trains. (I actually loved the ambiance of the passing

trains.) There was no mention of race, or the significance of being part of a mixed-race audience. I was worried that it would confuse the cast or hurt morale. I wondered if I should talk about artists' oppression, art vs. capitalism, or even waste energy mentioning it.

I didn't have to worry. After our usual opening circle and go-round for the dancers to say one thing they did particularly well in the previous performance, Brandon spontaneously suggested we do another go-round for people to tell all the good comments they heard about the show. It was obviously aimed as an appreciation and morale-booster for me; and I was moved doubly, because it was the first time the group had decided for themselves on a go-round, and had moved in a forward direction on its own power without my instigation. The group had acquired a life of its own, separate from my or Leah's direction.

At the cast party, at my parent's home, people got to relax together, watch the video, laugh at "mistakes", appreciate each other, and interrupt self-negation. My friend Ladonna, the music director, an art leader and instigator of many Birmingham events, glowed about the success of the project and talked with others about the need to continue working together cross-racially. Without my saying a word, three people vowed never to let the black and white arts communities in Birmingham lose touch with each other again. Several of the dancers thanked me for a life-changing experience. I plan to check in with this whole group and do reunions when I go back to Birmingham yearly.

Many of us learned much from Forest Rising. It wasn't perfect; there are

many things I would have done differently with better funding and more time, such as build a larger platform for audience seating, so more people could see it. But it was a great way for me to express the love I feel for the artists of my hometown, and give them every tool I could pass on for greater solidarity. In hanging together I'm sure the power of Birmingham artists will overcome the harsh criticism of those that want things to stay safe, familiar, and forever the same. However, it is necessary to speak up and defend the BAA's right to present and be funded for challenging, multi-racial, process-oriented work.

Susan Hefner

New York City

"Becoming-Still: Perspectives in Musical Ontology after Deleuze and Guattari"

Michael Szekely

2004

A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos. Perhaps the child skips as he sings, hastens or slows his pace. But the song itself is already a skip: it jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos and is in danger of breaking apart at any moment (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 311).

We differentiate, for the purposes of theoretical explication, but with an ear attuned to any praxeological ramifications, between the *musical space* and *making-music*. Musical space is better initially apprehended as a paradigm rather than as a totality. With all the technical implements, imaginative intuitions, and methodological strategies, the performer is situated within a musical space. There is not yet any ambition here – only an as yet open territory of possibility. But in a musical space this territory is agitated. The performer simply finds herself *there*: will she be trapped or will she be still? To an extent, this very question involves a tension within making-music. For making-music will either psychologize itself into a motivation toward aesthetic value structures or become dissolved, albeit with discontinuous agitations, into a smooth surface. Will the performer be ambitious or will she *become...*?

Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to that which one is becoming, and through which one becomes .

Becoming-music is defined by the trajectory from making-music to the musical space, but this trajectory operates as a *break*. Making-music gives itself ecstatically over to the musical space. There is indeed a momentary sense of emptiness here, or, better yet, of numbness, but it is perhaps better described as a *fullness-to-explosion*. Fullness-to-explosion is precisely the confrontation between the totality of historied having-to-do-with-music strata and the paradigm of a musical space.

One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself.

There is some truth to an adage amongst some musicians that one learns everything about music, about music-making, in order to “unlearn” it. If the above trajectory from making-music to the music space were “full,” it would mark the performer attempting to remember all that she has learned, to utilize efficient memory instead of desirous forgetting – *short-term memory*, *forgetting as a process* – precisely in order to “create” a musical space. With the same result, if the above trajectory from making-music to the musical space were “empty,” it would mark the performer feeling as though she has not learned enough. “Becoming is an antimemory” .

But is there a reverse trajectory – that is, from a musical space to making-music?

In one sense, it would simply be the depletion of what we have described thus far:

the musical space is in some way questioned as to its fullness, or emptiness, reterritorialized in order to “make *this* music.” Thus, the totality of historied having-to-do-with-music strata resurfaces in some form, and the performer objectifies the musical space in order to “make” music; the musical space exists merely as an opportunity for making-music. Now, superficially, this is true – that is, “musical space” does have the connotation of something created beforehand,

e.g., via categorization, instrumentation, and configuration (duo, trio, quartet, quintet, orchestra), venue, and audience, expected or presently gathered. It would be said that all of these “contribute” to the actual performance; and that the performer especially is well-aware of them. However, these might better be described as a way of making-music “outside” of the making-music in the performance. They constitute the discourses and social conditions of music as an historical entity. Indeed, we make most of our music outside of picking up any instruments. Music is prostituted in this way; one need not play music in order to *play at* making music. Thus, in the case of music the discourses and social conditions coincide with how we imagine it to participate culturally, and how we imagine our cultures to participate in it. But here too there is a break: expectations of music will never be completely fulfilled. It is a matter of gradations, of the intensity of such expectations. So, within a somewhat superficial field our playing-at-making-music is indeed a kind of “musical space,” a *savoir* of music. Of course, there are other intensities present in a performance.

There are intensities of expectation constituted by the *savoir* of music, but the suggestion that they will never be completely fulfilled entails precisely that they will be uprooted, then left, or changed – which is to say, deterritorialized: intensities of expectation becoming performance intensities. Once again, there is no “outlook” for these intensities, and certainly no judgment. There is no outlook, i.e., of intensities of expectation affecting the performance “negatively” or “positively.” For it is by way of an *event* that they affect the musical space at all. There is no judgment, i.e., of the performance being “bad” or “good” from having been affected by intensities of expectation. For if we wonder at this we are simply playing at music, resisting the musical space. Fair enough. But what of a recording? This would seem to present a slightly different problematic.

Certainly it could be argued that, although one *performance* of Edgar Varese's "Ameriques" will nonetheless be different from the next, that one performance of "Ameriques" which is "captured" by a *recording* is available to us again and again as the "same" performance, not just the same notes, but the same attacks, the same inflections, the same rhythmic and temporal milieu. The problem with this example, as an objection to what we have said about performance, is that in order to make it an objection one must paradoxically deny somewhat the musical space of *this* performance of "Ameriques," looking instead to the savoir inevitably built-up around this recording's performance, and the piece itself. We tend to rely too much upon what "grows" on us as "moments" of the performance we do or do not enjoy. We rely upon things about which we are value-neutral, but which we can nonetheless anticipate again and again, whenever we slip this recording, this "immortalization" of "Ameriques" into our player. Still, we somehow cheat the musical space "Ameriques" creates – thus cheating our own experience of it *each* time – by letting its immortalization collapse *solely* into the savoir built so readily around it. Actually, we make "Ameriques" an arborescent structure, a totality, a hierarchy of moments, by rooting it in a recording. We stop listening to it. Our expectational intensities have been, if not completely fulfilled, directed toward "*what* I will hear," generally, and "*what* will happen *here*," specifically, in the music. In a recording, even more so than in a performance, the intensities of a performance requires more deterritorializing impetus. In a performance, our expectational intensities are more and more transformed by intensities of performance simply by the musical space in which we find ourselves, insofar as there is fullness-to-explosion. In a recording, however, intensities, even expectational ones, are increasingly rooted, as we have suggested, as we come to "learn" the recording. In a performance, we *are* inevitably deterritorialized, at least initially, at whatever gradation our intensities of expectation at the onset. In a recording, however, we are

inevitably handed a reterritorializing card. Recording is a recoding. With a recording there is a tendency to not only recodify the music, but to recodify ourselves in the process. If we can acknowledge that each time we listen to this particular recorded performance of Varese's "Ameriques" the music, through whatever intensities and discoveries enthusing us, is *not* the same, *not* phenomenologically-in-itself, *not* the sum of its sounds (in essence, potentially decoding), then the same must be true for ourselves. We bring the difference and singularity of our lives to the operating table each and every time we experience even that same (i.e., recorded) performance of "Ameriques." This speaks of us more generally that we experience *any* music at every turn improvisationally. This speaks of music that it is essentially deterritorializing.

Now, we will still look to the savoir surrounding Varese's piece and find that the methods, techniques, and approaches involved are not at all "improvisational," as they are in improvisational jazz, for example. However, what are these methods, techniques, and approaches but precisely that which constitute the savoir built-up around Varese's "Ameriques"? Indeed, it should strike us as odd that such aspects of certain types of music have stood as the inventory for various Western cultural elites as to why improvisational jazz, which is said to lack these aspects, is not as "serious" a music. First of all, if it is to be *at all* acknowledged that improvisational jazz *does* implement methods, techniques, and approaches, only perhaps not necessarily the same ones as Western classical music, then the challenge is based on an arbitrary distinction regarding which aspects constitute seriousness. More profound, however, is the fact that, even here, we can only make the claim against "Ameriques"-as-improvisation from outside the musical space created by the music, outside of the endlessly different musical spaces created every time we experience the music. Still, one might insist, "Ameriques" is a *composed* piece; the players read from a *score*; there is no *interpretation* involved. Let us move backwards through this objection.

Firstly, no interpretation? Would we actually have the audacity to assert that there is an “original” version of the Varese piece? What is this original? The score? Whose scoring of it? Varese’s own? The Boosey and Hawkes’ printing of it? A particular recording perhaps? Whose performance of it? The Ensemble Modern conducted by Ingo Metzmacher? The Ensemble Intercontemporain conducted by Pierre Boulez? You get the idea.

Secondly, what after all *is* a score? If we insist on asking the question this way, we run into some interesting but ultimately futile discussion, trying to negotiate the balance between the real and the virtual, the sound and the image, the action and the symbol. Here we are *deducing* the having-to-do-with-music. But a musical space strikes us, upon ecstatic *induction*, as *already* virtual reality, as sound-image, as symbolic action. So, instead, we might ask the question, “*How* after all *goes* a score?” We can discover this only by playing it: “I’ll play it first and tell you what it is later” (Miles Davis). A score is not a way to “create” a musical space. *Playing* a score *is* a musical space. Simply apprehending a score implies precisely the arborescence of rooting music in that score, whereas a musical space implies the nomadism of playing. Alas, we do more than “interpret” a score; we *experiment* with it, from it. When we come to the “composed” elements, then, we see yet again a break – a break in methods, techniques, and approaches:

- 1) from composer to composition – an *urge-writing improvisation*.
- 2) from score to performer – a *symbolic-interpretive improvisation*.
- 3) from performer to the air, to the world – a *sound-release improvisation*.

Now, the question of how and when these operations occur is a question for every

musical space, occurring with different multiplicities of intensities, with different interest, within different capacities and contexts. Choosing to compose one note against another, indeed to compose one note instead of no note, is to make an improvisational choice. Choosing to play just so soft when you see “*ppp*” written in a score is to make an improvisational choice. But here still we must speak of the gradations of experiencing a musical space, of gradations as regards ways of improvising a musical space.

As it turns out, that which we say of the performer is to be said of the listener is to be said of the composer, etc. We say “spectrum-modes” to emphasize the praxeological anarchy of these various lines of flight to and from music, a resistance to their hierarchizing tendencies, even as is possible merely in the theoretical explication of them. For we are tempted by the savoir of music in which we are situated to apprehend these as more and more specialized, a broader to thinner, as larger to smaller, when in fact they all negotiate their own spectrum, which may or may not involve these types of trajectories. Experiencing-improvising music *is* playing, *is* listening in it, *is* composing it, *is* thinking it, *is* reading it.

One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune .

We are at any point engaged in any or all of the above spectrum-modes. But it would be significant, of course, if we were to say essentially the opposite – that is, that we are but one of these spectrum-modes, or none of them at all.

The former marks the *schizophrenic* musician. Albeit with intensities that always have the potential to be oriented toward a certain spectrum-mode at the expense of any others, she

nonetheless extended outward from the musical space in which she has been (de)territorialized. She extends her ear outward to listen in the musical space, an ear swallowed by the musical space. She extends her lips and her limbs, her bowels and her groin, outward to play in the musical space, a playing situated in the musical space, as it is given force by it. She extends her hand-brain outward to compose on a blank page, a page that acts like a fetish. She extends her sound-thoughts outward to think in the musical space.

However, the initial, “given,” (de)territorialization is not at all enough for the schizophrenic musician. Although it was in resisting the reterritorializing strains possible in any musical space that she extended outward to become any number of spectrum-modes (e.g., as performer-becoming-listener, as listener-becoming-thinker, as thinker-becoming-composer, as composer-becoming-performer), the schizophrenic musician ultimately stretches to extend so far outward as to touch the impossible. Her desire for a completely smooth, flattened, musical space *from which she would be all but indistinguishable* is so positive that she will risk herself again and again, becoming-music to the point of stillness. Somehow, like the musical space in which she finds herself simply by playing, this stillness toward which she ultimately extends herself seems inexorably attached to her desire, presenced simply by her desiring. She desires to extend so far that she would even defy extension: “...spatium not extension, Zero intensity as principle of production”.

The *paranoid* musician is concerned with isolating, or obliterating, spectrum-modes. Albeit with expectational intensities that could just as easily become performance intensities, she nonetheless retracts her ear inward to listen for the music-making, an ear straining to listen for “things” in the music. She retracts her lips and her limbs, her bowels and her groin, inward to

play at music-making, a playing-at situated outside the musical space, as it attempts with such defeated precision to force a musical space, to create it. She retracts her hand-brain inward to control the musical space by composing on a blank page, a page she imagines already written, already played, already heard – a page which is truly blank. She retracts her sound-thoughts inward to think about music, to play at the having-to-do-with-music, to trace her knowledge of its strata: “The map has to do with performance, whereas tracing always involves an alleged ‘competence’”. The paranoid musician is the one who consistently looks to the *savoir* of music, who consistently describes music in terms of methods, techniques, and approaches, who consistently asks, “Did you hear *this* in the music?” or “How will I play *this* type of music?” Of course, some discourse is unavoidable. Even a multiplicity of performance intensities could be said to activate discourses, and somehow, as we have suggested, the *savoir* of music can slip into even the smoothest, flattest, musical space imaginable.

Still, the schizophrenic musician – like the avant-garde artist, the surrealist, who forced the confrontation between art-as-institution and art-as-life praxis – has some desire, enough so that she may let go, parody, transform, deterritorialize the *savoir*, sabotage the discourse. It is the opposite with the paranoid musician. She uses discourse to sabotage the musical space, uses the *savoir* to reterritorialize performance intensities into expectational ones, attempts to form a musical space by making-music, attempts to redirect subversions, attempts to grab onto a territory. But “there is a territory precisely when milieu components *cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead*, when they cease to be functional to become expressive. There is a territory when the rhythm has expressiveness” (315, my emphasis).

The generative activity of a musical space is precisely such that there is a sense of singularities (i.e., events occurring at an extremely localized level) that *just were* and singularities that are *not just yet*. Our schizophrenic musician “gets on the train” of these singularities, blowing them up into sustained intensities.

...as the work develops, the motifs increasingly enter into conjunction, conquer their own plane, become autonomous from the dramatic action, impulses, and situations...(319).

A tone, for example, is not only generative in that it always stands in relation to other tones, or groupings of tones, which move through the musical space, but because its duration, attack, and inflection propel that tones and other tones forward. A tone is not a note, or, a tone is not *merely* a note, or, a tone is a more *subtle, profound, acute quality* of a note (either of these could suffice). We are tempted to describe tones the same way in which we describe notes. Indeed, “duration,” “attack,” and “inflection,” are all terms which have meaning as regards directives for making-music – i.e., how to play at that note, how to listen to that note, how to compose that note, etc. But notes remain functional. Even beyond their ultimately arbitrary designations (“C#,” “F,” “Gb,” “B”), they can exist only in the having-to-do-with-music, only in the discourses of music, only as regards the *savoir* of music. Notes thrown into a multiplicity of performance intensities – whether played or read from a score – inevitably lose their functionality and become dissolved into the musical space, disseminated into the performative territory, arousing perhaps newer “functions” which, far from being grounding attributes, are immanently deterritorializing. They become *affective*. They become tones. Moreover, this becoming does not express a one-to-one relation: *a* note does not become *a* tone, but is already a multiplicity of tones. [Even if we choose to play at music in terms of notes, we find that *a* note is of course experienced differently

depending on where, how, why, on what, from what, through what, it is played]. If notes are to constitute the “material” of making-music, tones constitute the *sensations* felt within a musical space.

Every sensation is a question, even if the only answer is silence
(What is Philosophy?, 196).

So, not only notes, but all methods, techniques, and approaches brought to a musical space become sensation in some way, become multiplicities of sensations. Now, for the sake of our theoretical explication, could we say that these sensations are essentially singularities, or, more commonly, that they constitute “moments”? Well, first of all, we know that an analogous relationship between notes and intensities would be incorrect, though tempting. In some sense notes and intensities are not only *categorically* contrasting – the former *savoiric*, the latter performative – but *functionally* contrasting. The former are “broken down” into tones, whereas the latter are “built up” from singularities. But we might also say that sensations are both more pervasive and more acute than singularities. Singularities mark a more present-at-hand, active becoming, while sensations mark a passive becoming, underlying our experience. Active becoming of singularities: the circulation of desiring-music. Passive becoming of sensations: the blood of desiring-music.

Meanwhile, it must be remembered that although a train is “confined” to a track, a pattern, a direction, it nonetheless moves ahead. The trajectory of the train moves *through* the instantaneously changing content of the world. Although there is an effort to expand a singular occurrence, to convert it, the *rhythmic-horizontal* plane upon which that occurrence is resituated

nonetheless moves through an invariably changing *chaotic-vertical* plane (we may call these the two planar tendencies within the plane of a musical space). The musical space becomes surreal: the result being exemplary of a meeting between chance and necessity (*le hazard objectif*).

What chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-between – between two milieus, rhythm-cosmos or the chaosmos...In this in-between, chaos becomes rhythm, not inexorably, but it has a chance to (ATP, 313).

Ultimately, there is involved at any point in a musical space a kind of phenomenological “horizon” of sorts, with an Husserlian emphasis on *retention* on one end and a Heideggerian emphasis on *protention* on the other end. Schizophrenic music is in a sense the ecstatic becoming in-between these ends. The flattened stillness of the musical space mentioned above is approached the more and more agitated this ecstasy becomes. Now, it should strike us as a somewhat paranoid, reterritorializing tendency to fabricate a build-up of intensities from a singular occurrence. Indeed, it would seem to be exemplary of making-music, of looking to the having-to-do-with-music, of trying to create a musical space, or at least create a “moment” in a musical space. For in order to engage this one must step away from the musical space and toward making-music. Alas, our suspicions are not unfounded: reterritorialization *will* inevitably happen in performance. Points of convergence will be contrived at times. However, from what has been said about the meeting of rhythmic-horizontals and chaotic-verticals, we find that there is the stubborn deterritorializing tendency of a musical space which forces any attempt at making-music into a multiplicity of performance intensities. We may say that it forces a *line*.

A line of becoming is not defined by the points that it connects, or by the points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle, it runs perpendicular to the points first perceived, transversally to the localizable relation to distant or contiguous points.

In a musical space there is no intention, only retention, protention, ecstasy. A truly depleted paranoid making-music, whether in performance or not, would involve merely retention. Even repetition, firmly placed in the savoir of various types of music, whether more or less manifest (more in the minimalism and “phase” music of Terry Riley and Steve Reich, for example; less in most improvisational jazz), and *seemingly* based on retention, is nonetheless made sheer difference by its protention. In repetition, a protention-diagonal cuts through and across the rhythmic-horizontal and chaotic-vertical. Indeed, a rubbing between repetition and time, between repetition and becoming, marks the sheer difference in repetition. For instance, the balalaika player who effortlessly repeats that one note in the context of a flowing, almost rubatoesque, melodicism, approaches something ecstatic. Indeed, she approaches the smooth surface of a musical space, perhaps even more differentiated in this case for the fact that, unlike an instrument with a natural sustaining mechanism, or even a stringed instrument with a bow, a note on the balalaika is sustained *only* by repeated attacks. So, one is “aware” of the repetitions, the repeated attacks, while becoming increasingly “unaware” of them over time. Repetition is a paradoxical breeding ground of sorts. On the one hand, when engaged in a musical space it is present so unabashedly that it easily risks reterritorialization; it can be sustained, or “taken up” again and again, for effect, for usefulness. On the other hand, when engaged in a musical space, it forever deterritorializes, cutting abruptly through the meat of the chaos while simultaneously retaining the chaotic flows – a sudden shift barely felt.

Repetition is truly that which disguises itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself. It is not underneath the masks, but is formed from one mask to another, as though from one distinctive point to another, from one privileged instant to another, with and within the variations (Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 17).

A “repeated” rhythm is not a repeated sameness, but is always rhythm differentiated, always potentially “poly-rhythmic,” precisely because repetition thrusts it *against* time, even against its own weave of forces, accents, and intensities. In contrast to cadence and metricality, repetition and rhythm mark the kind of “unbalanced” quality of a musical space. They express the production of difference in a musical space, which may, paradoxically, be expressed in terms of cadence and metricality, which may, in turn, differentiate the pulse of the musical space even further, and so on: “...a period exists only in so far as it is determined by a tonic accent, commanded by intensities. Yet we would be mistaken about the function of accents if we said that they were reproduced at equal intervals. On the contrary, tonic and intensive values act by creating inequalities or incommensurabilities between metrically equivalent period or spaces...Here again, the unequal is the most positive element. Cadence is only the envelope of a rhythm, and of a relation between rhythms”.

We tend to think of repetition in terms of continuity, and there may be some truth to this assumption. Alas, we experience it as a very distinct quality occurring in the musical *over time*, and in a certain way. But this assessment of repetition is isolatable only for a paranoid reception of a musical space, only for a one-dimensional (if at all dimensional!) critique, only for someone who insists upon asking, “How exactly is repetition functioning here?” Assessing repetition in this way *represents* it – but this endeavor denies the fact of repetition’s presencing: “...within representation, repetition is indeed forced to undo itself even as it occurs. Or rather, it does not occur at all. Repetition in itself cannot occur under these conditions”. Representation is a way of

paranoia, added to difference but reducing it to sameness. Repetition is a way of schizophrenia, an anarchic, infinitely primary affectation that is expressed through difference.

There is...nothing repeated which may be isolated or abstracted from the repetition in which it was formed, but in which it is also hidden. There is no bare repetition...

Meanwhile, the affectation of repetition is happening elsewhere and everywhere, its emergence has already taken to its subversive, deterritorializing flight and spread like a virus. Repetition is infinitely more generative than cumulative, more regeneration than reiteration, more an arouser of difference than a sponge of sameness. What we hear is never the same, at any instant, but infinitesimally different and infinitely repetitive. Repetition: build-up of intensities: fullness-to-explosion: ecstasy: (stillness).

Bibliography

Deleuze, Gilles, Difference and Repetition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Deleuze, Gilles, Negotiations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, What is Philosophy? (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Book Reviews

by Davey Williams

2004

Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836-1970

by John Whiteoak

Currency Press Ltd., 1999

PO Box 2287

Strawberry Hills

New South Wales, Australia

ISBN 0-86819-543-X

www.currency.com.au

One might think that a book on improvisatory music in Australia between the early 19th century and 1970 might be a point well missed. *What improvisatory music?* one may ask, considering that the early 1970s is just about the time free improvised music began to rear its head 'down under' on recordings and performances.

In the course of answering this question, Mr. Whiteoak has written a singularly important work concerning the origins of improvised music. Presented ostensibly as a peculiarly Australian experience of new music's evolution, involving traditional European-inherited musics, 'imported' American forms such as jazz, ragtime, vaudeville (already an amalgamation of African-American and 'Euro-American' forms), and influences from the continent's own aboriginal cultures, *Playing Ad Lib* is in fact a profile of how free improvisation found its origins throughout Western culture.

Or more generally: any European culture informing, and being informed by another, non-European culture. More specifically, Mr. Whiteoak notes a symbiotic relationship between what he calls "Approved" and "Anonymous" genres of music. "Approved" music-making - i.e., that descended from the European colonials - includes "professional concert-hall and salon recitals, opera, organized amateur activities such as choirs and brass bands, and the systematized teaching or learning of performance practice...those which were considered to reinforce social cohesion. Together, they represent one aspect of what was described in the nineteenth century as 'rational recreation.' ...In many cases these are simply pleas to support activities which stood in contrast to drinking, gambling, fighting and other socially erosive activities."

This genre is contrasted by "Anonymous" music-making, "less socially approved, or more 'irrational' forms of entertainment such as street or hotel entertainment, circus, variety or blackface minstrel shows, silent cinema, public dancing and so forth. Much of this music-making falls into the category of utilitarian accompaniment practice, which further underlines its lower socio-cultural status."

Mr. Whiteoak then nails down some surprising and ironic aspects of these "Anonymous" music-makings, in which one finds most of the vital components of improvisatory music-making, though significantly not *all* the vital components, which are only to be found in "Approved" music-making.

To begin with, he notes that "Anonymous" musics fell into "one or another category of what is described today as popular entertainment." For most improvisers today of course, that's laughable, but improvisatory practices in that time really were also associated with "playing for money," each situation demanding uniquely varied and adaptable music "that could cut through underlying noise and demand attention...Accompaniment to theatrical entertainment genres such as variety, burlesque and pantomime provided musicians with considerable latitude to transgress legitimate practice in a creative way [and] thus created a broader base for the acceptance of a spontaneous or seemingly spontaneous exploration of extended musical possibilities."

In using Melbourne, and the composer Percy Grainger as his primary examples, Mr. Whiteoak has created a model of how certain aspects of free improvised music developed throughout Western cultures; how they first utilized inherent musical freedoms, then revolutionized them, then metamorphosed them, then made them underlying principles of musical freedom, to be revolutionized in turn.

It is important to note here that despite the apparent antiquity of the book's subject matter, Mr. Whiteoak's viewpoint is thoroughly that of a deeply informed, modern-day improviser - whether he plays music or merely has an encyclopedic understanding of it. And 'encyclopedic' is no exaggeration; the path he traces starts way back in the century before last, so to speak, and winds its way through an insightful and original view that carries on into the seminal work of Grainger into the even more directly improvisational work of Keith Humble, Barry McKinn and Robert Rooney in the 1960s.

It is also important to note that this book is thoroughly packed with information, a real blow-by-blow examination of a largely ignored aspect of free improvisation. Profusely illustrated with engravings and photos of these once-forgotten musicians, their gigs, flyers, programs, ticket stubs and a large collection of musical composition excerpts from minstrel shows to graphic scores, this book constitutes an important addition to the rather small list of books on improvisation that actually get it right; understanding improvisation as being singularly equipped to constantly reveal:

"...something that may still prove to be the most significant aspect of improvisatory musical practice: its potential as musical Esperanto or, perhaps, pidgin, enabling expressive cross-generational, cross-gender, cross-cultural, cross-aesthetic, creative, harmless, educational and joyful human play."

As an aside, it's my opinion that the reason it stops in 1970 is that the rest is history anyway.

Hothouse!

A new Chicago tradition..

LaDonna Smith

2004

"This is a place where we pick the music of the unrecorded and no-radio play," says Marguerite Horberg as she welcomes guests to the *Women Make Half the Sound Festival 2000*, created and sponsored by the HOTHOUSE, the International Center for Performance and Exhibition, located on Balbo Street in Chicago. "We do it by charging at the door, having a bar, and writing grants." Pointing towards the large gallery just beyond the bar in the other room, she notes that the current show is an Homage to artists from Ecuador.

The HOTHOUSE features all kinds of eclectic & creative music styles, from world music to jazz to works of new composition to free improvisation, even the fathers of the blues... In fact, Robert Lockwood Jr. celebrated his 85th birthday this year at the HOTHOUSE.

From 1991-1994, the HOTHOUSE curated the *Women of the New Jazz Festival*. The featured artists did not come from bebop or standards, but from a more avant garde position. Most were instrumentalists, and not the vocalists, so usually associated with women in jazz. Shortly thereafter the HotHouse closed for two years, in search of a new and better space to present the music. Now in it's second year at the beautiful new location on Balbo Street, (downtown, and just a few blocks from the famous Lakeshore Park and Drive), Marguerite created the *Women Make Half the Sound Festival 2000*, in hopes to renew the case of *the Women of the New Jazz Festival*, and she hopes to do this project every six months, starting small scale with local talent and selected guests, and expanding as the project grows, and grants can be written.

Already from the programming currently in place, women carry a good ratio of the action with Yoko Noge's Blues Band and the Mayumi Project, which blends Asian music and jazz, and often features the energetic Chicago bass player, Tatsu Aoki. With the mixed styles and programming, along with eclectic & stylish décor, Marguerite has managed to foster an audience that is culturally integrated, exemplified by the presence of a racially mixed white, black and Asian clientele. Aside from the musical diversity, in both the international gallery and the club itself, the proliferation of art from around the world, African, Asian, and art deco blends to

form an atmosphere that is inclusive and comfortable. Large "jazz" paintings intermixed with works from African, Hispanic, and unknown modern artists converge with the classic 60's accessories, 50's ashtrays & lamps, plants, Buddhas, and candlelight, as well as fiery rose-orange walls give enough ambience and warmth to make anyone feel at home and comfortable, yet someplace creative and special.

Although people of all ages were present, I couldn't help but notice that the place was packed with college students, indicative of the growing trend towards musical freedom and diversity growing with a more youthful audience, and presumably forecasting a coming renaissance and emergence of diverse and empowering forms of musical creativity, birthing new artists and burgeoning sensitivities to the power of music to develop community. Yes, I'd say that the music scene in Chicago, as exemplified by the HOTHOUSE, not only is alive and well, but setting an example for a healthy trend in society to develop public spaces which nurture the creative human Spirit.

The HOTHOUSE, Center for International Performance and Exhibition
is located at 31 East Balbo Street, Chicago Illinois.
Phone: 312-362-9707
<http://www.hothouse.net>

Women Make Half the Sound Festival 2000

March 15, 16

HOTHOUSE, CHICAGO live!!!!

by **LaDonna Smith**

I walked into the room to a superbly stunning rhythmic percussion piece on a couple of 2 X 4's laid on foam rubber set on music stands. Carrie & Jack the Dog (Carrie Biolo and Jeff Kowalkowski) were the opening act! What followed was a series of highly sensitive vibraphone and piano duets. There was a counting piece for two voices with animated conversational interruptions, some French café styled accordion mixed into the instrumental palette. With rhythmic and dynamic interest and sensitivity, their well structured set kept the audience engaged. It was a technically brilliant set.

Laura Lee Moses launched freeform improv for traditional jazz instrumentation which included her on alto/bari/piano, with Cecile Savage- bass, David Pavkovic-drums, and Rob Mazurek- cornet. Ed Ludwig was the missing drummer who had a work-conflict that evening. Moses, a multi-instrumentalist wind player & pianist, composes/improvises free jazz style. The second piece was a composition written originally for Eric Leonardson's famous "Springboard". It featured a prominent rock syncopation between the bassist and the drummer, colored by sparkling riffs on cornet and lush changes on the piano. All parts seemed to be in contrast with each other, hallmarked by a catching beat which disintegrated to spiritual improv excursions weaving in and out of its own themes. One moment arrested us all, plowing violently in aggressive blowing "Machine Gun" style. By contrast, the next piece employed single note contributions wrapped in a heavy air of space, or total understatement. The piece closed with a silence so pregnant that the Hot House air conditioner was an equal contributor to the composition...and remarkably, even the band members seemed to not know exactly whether or not it had actually ended.

I guess one of the reasons I was present, indeed to write about this little festival of women was the fact that I, too, was invited to play! (**LaDonna Smith**) It goes without saying, I will not review my own music, but I did have the sense of satisfaction knowing that I had turned

my subconscious over completely to channel Spirit, and Spirit gave me some gifts to deliver. That is all I can ask. As I recall, it was fairly intense. Mostly viola and voice solo avalanche.

The final set was the sweet icing on a very spicy cake of an evening. **Maggie Brown** wooed the audience with mellow soul ballads, sensitive songs with titles like, "Get Understanding" and "Walkin in Your Brother's Shoes". The stark beauty of the voice alone, accompanied only by a single solo string bass. "Feather, does it depend on the weather?"..."or love to fly around"...

The second evenings program featured **Robbie Hunsinger**, double reeds and **Tatsu Aoki** on string bass in an absolutely exquisite first set. It wouldn't have mattered to me if were the only set of the evening. It was absolutely great.

Robbie opens with a shenai solo (Chinese musette) invoking spirit into the room, in a lonely call of the deep. Tatsu enters carefully with a komungo-like quality, also with the tone of an invocation. In this piece I could rally get the cross connection between Asian music and jazz, a sisterhood created by contemplative evocative research into the interior place, and allowing the instrument to speak and explore the range of that inquiry. Just as I was becoming comfortable, the rhythm seized the moment as Aoki repeated relentless a bass pattern that was neither rock, nor jazz, but some melting together of the two, as Hunsinger's continuous exploration and patterning around was so seamless that I didn't even notice when she switched from English horn to clarinet. This happened frequently. She would change colors by changing instruments in an organic, progression akin to a slow crescendo coming on before you know it.

The third alluded back to the first, but this time in a haunting fashion, the shenai was played into a snare drum creating additional "reactive" resonance. Time felt totally suspended as Tatsu sustained a simple abstraction of insects and the suspense of a hot day in the desert, transforming it to the repetitive rhythm of urban meditation, that is... groove.

Aoki introduced the fourth piece as the bass transformed renderings of nature's insect drones. Robin treating here melodic contribution of the wooden oboe in much the way a Chinese opera shenai player would imitate bird song. Frequently, Tatsu's sense of groove would revert to a uniquely original rendition of the human heartbeat, but realized through the use of extended techniques such as his alternating single note and strummed harmonics. Robin's smooth mastery of her instrument was evident in extraordinary breath control and phrasing sensibilities in some of the most extended linear playing which developed slowly over the illusion of time standing still, or long waiting.

After one dreamlike excursion into another, drawing thin images of blues, jazz, and Asian music, nature, birdsong, and the ticking heart, the dream faded... and ended. Yet we were left still in the altered state created by the music... thus we were transported.

BLACK EARTH was also a pleasurable and interesting group with a varied and interesting program. Band leader **Nikki Mitchell** (flute) was joined by **Marlene Rosenberg** -bass, **Davu Seru** -drums, and Iyiola -"messenger of movement".

An upbeat entry of straight ahead "head" jazz fare, "Sweet-tooth" was fronted by flutist Nikki Mitchell, interrupted by two very signature solos. First the bass solo of Marlene showed jazz prowess and instrumental virtuosity as did the colorful gestures of Chicago's promising young jazz drummer, Davu Seru. Now, he is a guy to watch for! The music was pleasurable enough to listen to, although it was derivative of classic jazz styles of the past generations, although the set became much more abstract as it went. Clearly, the virtuosity of Nikki, revealing itself more and more as the music got deeper. A highlight of the set was the appearance of a young African American dancer whose slender arms and frame expressed emotions and processes of joy emerging into life from the womb, and there was another dance, more voluptuous, of a young woman coming of age. It was remarkable to denote the synergy between the women, and the almost androgenous quality of the instruments. The bass in the hands of Marlene, the sensitivity of the male drummer, his delicacy, and the leadership exuded by the highly feminine and delicate beauty of the band-leader, flautist Nikki Mitchell. The earth quality was a sure feminine energy with masculine strength, and androgenous soul.

Andrea Parkins, accordion/electronics, of NYC was the outside guest for the evening. Starting with a wash of sound, generated from the accordion, but modulated by devices, delays, and electronic loop and modulations, the music quickly accelerated to a relentless roar which both assaulted and filled the space. Complete with feedback and distortion, you would think you were in a sonic chamber, being transported to the next dimension. Moving from terrorizing to "other worldly" and angelic, she set the tone for an experience from amplified underwater oceanic vibrations to earthly crisis. At times the uncontrolled feedback was so intense that I had to hold my ears, but aside from that, the fierce sound was equally registered in the tense facial expressions of the performer. A lot of gut wrenching, a helping of pain. An aesthetic of compounded complexity in electronically saturated rampages. Although Andrea Parkins handles the accordion like a lady wrestler, her treatment of the acoustic piano was no less aggressive, pounding out what could have been the reflection of a terribly bad time at the New York Airport, having finally arrived in Chicago many hours later than expected. Who knows? A musical offering of sheer rage.

When Andrea did return to the accordion, it was a continuation of the theatre of assault, as subtle sounds from the accordion were drowned away in a roar of noise and octave divides. The women in the audience were being run off in groups of threes, while the men were leaving single file. Only the fittest survived. The set proved to be cleansing by exhaustion.

Toe2000 (Yoko Noge- voice, Dave Pavkic-drums, and Griffin Rodriguez-bass) featured **Yoko Noge**, well known in Chicago as a jazz-blues singer. On this set, she sounded nothing like the "southern" blues, or Chicago style, like I expected, but more of a new era of urban honesty, Japanese style blues emotion. She began with energy, a funk rock background as

Yoko fronted with the grace and beauty of traditional Japanese art. Surges and waves mixed and blended between the guitarist and the bassists' electronic effects work. A relentless throbbing maintained a trance like quality as visually Yoko maintained a stoic quietude before her vocal interjections, words in Japanese, unintelligible, but direct, largely spoken. Segue to almost Marlene Dietrich, segue to techo-pop bizarre mix of elements as eclectic as the HotHouse itself. She spoke her poetry, she sang her songs, and transformations did occur. I enjoyed the intricate understated ostanatos of the guitarist (who was he?) with the raw and naked energies of bassist and drummer. A straight-forward backup with enough quirks, color, subtlety, and originality to compliment and enhance the muse, Yoko, her message and laments,

"Slowly to the edge, slowly to the center...."

COMMENTARY & REVIEW

improvisation & film

Concert Review: John Butcher and Gerry Hemingway

by Wyman Brantley

Place:

Madison, WI: Frederic March Play Circle on the UW campus

Date: Thursday, 2-17-00

Instruments:

Butcher: Soprano & Tenor saxes;

Hemingway: Percussion and electronics

This gig consisted of two main parts: live musical interact while a film was shown, and then a "traditional" musical performance, after a break. Thus, the first aspect makes it a bit unusual, even within the already unusual world of free improvisation.

The strategic issues of playing along with a normal motion picture revolve around the fact that the film is *not* being improvised, while the music *is*. The question arises: do we allow the film to *influence* or playing consciously? Furthermore, in what sense would that be *free* improvisation? Should we, perhaps, set aside this pretense of free interaction, at least for this gig?

Notice, however, that such questions *do not* usually arise in regard to the audience, though they *might*. Why, one might wonder, does one rarely see a gig in which the players stare out at the audience, and play music as a reaction to what they see? Why do such things only happen when there is a *film*, or some other artwork?

I hope I can be forgiven for not yet *explicitly* mentioning Butcher and Hemingway. However, the above are the sorts of issues their gig raised, for me. They, as the reader might have guessed, *did* treat the presence of the film in some of the expected ways. They began the music by placing notes rhythmically in ways that were *clearly* related to the action (Butcher) and by creating an atmospheric electronic backdrop that served as an appropriate soundtrack (Hemingway.)

To their credit--though perhaps partly due to the nature of the film--they eventually moved out of that mindset. Once they did so, and the music began to cook on its own, the question became: What *is* the relationship of the music to the film? What justifies our thinking of the music and film as being parts of a whole? Perhaps, at certain points, there *was* no such justification; or perhaps the only relation was in the fact that we all *did* think of the two as an artistic whole.

Theoretical questions aside, what the audience takes from such a show is a feeling of whether "it" worked or not. The music clearly worked, once the players got past the pretense of reacting to the film. Butcher was more "American" in his playing than usual, perhaps driven to the more emotive, gutsy territories by Hemingway's lightning barrages. After all Hemingway is one of Braxton's major collaborators, which means that he had to learn to create "clouds of garbage-cans" to back up Chicagoan sax howling (to quote Braxton himself.) Hemingway's speed at several points was astounding, as was his ability to conjure novel sounds from a standard drum-kit.

The film, however, was barely tolerable. It was called "Slow Arc Walk," and its title alludes to the fact that it was a one-hour static shot of a man performing a slow, methodical "walk" up and down a room. I suppose that the idea was to choose a film that was simple enough not to distract from the music. I suppose that the film was no more boring than the walls or the stage itself. Perhaps we, the audience, were being prodded to ask ourselves why we were bored with the film if we were not bored by these surroundings. Fair enough. But these sorts of simple, abstract messages have been sent by *countless* other works, e.g. Cage/Tudor, Duchamp, Fluxus, and so on. Derivative boredom is just that. And so we were all quite primed for the excellent music interlude that followed the break.

Musings on Deep Listening

Retreat at Rose Mountain

a poem by Marilyn Lerch
Journeywoman Poet

2004

The rock'n roll, jolt and bump, rut-riding trip up Rose Mountain, then
slow down, letting go, attuning inward,
turning outward from silence, peace-seeping, pores
like little ears

when the mouth stops, the mask drops
who cares what you wear, what you don't say,
who gets seconds, who's on first, where the day goes
breathing across boundaries, following fantasies into snake pits, night
dreams into wake/work

morning movement underwater, single file of listening soles,
light step on membrane of baby skin up to the meadow
shake out, come alive, gesturing anew the essence of east, south, west,
north and center
blue herons in a circle, unisoned lift of limbs and breath

long stretches of silence and meditation the slow drag of clouds across New Mexico, morning hills
rusting into
green, crescendo and decrescendo of winds,
lulls sudden: air pockets of silence
uplifting articles in the outhouses but holding the non-verbal form asks no reading, no writing: my eyes
HAPPEN on this:
The best form in which to worship God is in all forms.

We create temporary social structures out of gesture, play, soundings: a
healing circle, improv of cellos, viola, voice and pine cones, forest
encounters of a surreal kind
Our silence gathers
knits

Are animals drawn into our orbit or we into theirs?
A deer drinks at the pond near the cook house, a bear circles nearer,
chipmunks scurry over our shoes,
one morning our meditation walk is so organically fused

with the surround that a rabbits sits a few yards away
poised during the slow procession of twenty-five folk
I walk in the forest intending to find deer, forget my intention, come
across a fawn and two doe
and the skunk family: their low-along-the-ground dolphin glide, glossy
undulant trail of black and white equally apportioned--grounding
image of the universe--rising through the plume, sweet bearers of light and shadow.
What do we really know?
One of us reframes a father's admonition--Listen here!--to Listen here.
We celebrate, honor, play, let our idiosyncrasies out of the bag, let our
peculiar warps and woofs weave a collective tapestry of love

Most of all we listen deeply here.

LMC Annual Festival of Experimental Music

London South Bank Centre May 27-29 2000

by Viv Corringham

Now in its ninth year and with a shameful lack of funding, the London Musicians' Collective Festival cut some costs this year with smaller groups and more local musicians and was none the worse for it. First though I should confess to a lack of objectivity here, as I was playing on the second night and subject to nerve-clouded judgement.

The festival opened with **David Toop, Jin Hi Kim and Frank Perry** making beautiful, subtle sounds on flutes, komungo (Korean zither) and percussion which included a huge, richly resonant singing bowl. **Stevie Wishart** followed with lively violin and vocals before moving on to the hurdy-gurdy, her main instrument. She used electronics to take it from its acoustic, traditional sound, of which I would have liked rather more, to an edgy electric guitar quality and even into dance rhythms.

Three men at three tables, their only light source three monitors, each screening one moving eye, and we're in **Die Trip Computer Die** territory. They play densely textured pieces where, amazingly, they all know when to stop, interspersed with a surreal humour in relating with the audience.

Last on the bill was the legendary **Walter Marchetti**, formerly of scandalous "destruction in art" group ZA. When I saw the grand piano I was sure it wouldn't be played. Walter sat parallel to it, his back to us, facing a score whose pages he turned in response to recorded music of treated piano. Impatience vied with relaxing into the poetry of it and pondering ideas of our role as audience, the parallel of composer and the music itself, and listening to the different ways that people walked out- some aggressively noisy, some apologetically on tiptoe.

The second night began with **My Heart's In Motion**, my project with guitar, bouzouki and samples player **Peter Cusack**. We expanded our duo to include double bass, saxophone, tabla and the turntable wizardry of Quebecois **Martin Tetreault** in a set combining songs and soundscapes. Obviously I am the last person able to comment on its effectiveness or not! Unfortunately the post-gig collapse meant that I missed ex- This Heat drummer **Charles Hayward's** solo. A pity, as I like his quirky songs and ferocious drumming. But I recovered in time for a very interesting performance by Japanese duo **Hoahio**. **Haco** sings, uses lots of fascinating electronic toys and gadgets, including feedback from a mike in a teapot, while **Yagi Michiyo** plays extraordinary koto, hitting as well as plucking the instrument.. Finally Sonic Youth's **Lee Renaldo** appeared with percussionist **William Hooker** and **Gert-Jan Prins** on homemade electronics to play a loud, dense, rockist set. Powerful stuff, but a highspot for me was the moment it all fell away to leave Renaldo on simple acoustic bells.

The last night began with an exhilarating set from **Steve Noble 4tet** who exploit those awkward moments in improvisation perfectly in order to change direction. There was a lot of close listening and sudden dynamic shifts. I enjoyed **John Edwards** attacking his double bass as if it was a percussion instrument. Until I heard **Toshimaru Nakamura** I never realised feedback could sound so beautiful and subtle. Using only a mixing desk he created hypnotic, long looping tones, an unexpected visual element being added by an overworked speaker which suddenly poured smoke across the stage.

Jean Herve Peron, sacked from Faust for being "too crazy", sang ecstatic and vulnerably sincere songs, adored by the many Faust fans in the audience and ably supported by **Chris Cutler** and **Simon King** on drums and guitar.

The festival was brought to a delightful end by the trio of **Anna Homler, Steve Beresford & Richard Sanderson**, each with a full table of toys, whose touching melodies and charming improvisations sent us out smiling into the cold breezy night .

Viv D. Corringham

Eric Leonardson and the Art of Acousmatic Composition

2004

By [Jacopo Andreini](#)

AAJ: Eric, give us a short and jolly introduction about you and your music.

EL: I'm an artist who makes and uses sounds that can be received as **art, music, or noise** among other things. I started doing this over twenty years ago, when I was a visual art student. I think the connection of my present-day activity, in relation to my past as a visual artist, was based on my interest in recorded sound as a material for making art, for making live art instead of static art objects. Now I work a lot as a free improvising musician, an electroacoustic or acousmatic composer, a radio artist, and a sound designer. I've also described myself as an instrument inventor, but I don't have a lot of instrument inventions to show you, just the **Springboard** and **my personal sound studio**. These are my instruments.

AAJ: What's an acousmatic composer???

EL: Like musique concrète, an **acousmatic composition** exists solely in recorded form rather than notation. It doesn't need to be performed because the composer finished it in the sound studio using sound recording, and nowadays computer technologies. It only needs to be played through loudspeakers. I first heard the term used by Canadian electroacoustic composers.

AAJ: Another deep and interesting description of your Springboard, if you can.

EL: I wanted to make new and unusual sounds that weren't purely electronic or concrete. I was drawn to coil springs because they were used long ago to create artificial reverb, and they are sensitive to vibrations. The Springboard began simply as a way to amplify a bowed coil spring with a contact microphone. I bought two large eyebolts and a spring at a hardware store. The board was just a discarded piece of wood lying around my studio space.

The contact mike was purchased at a surplus store for a few dollars, and it amplified board to a very high degree. This led me to attach other objects. I was fascinated by its sounds and I kept working on it, modifying and performing with it. I wasn't planning on making an instrument, but that's what evolved.

AAJ: How much do you think the contact mikes have influenced the production of all this new instruments builded with "discarded pieces"? My friends Cock ESP actually play live shows with just a couple of contact mikes plugged into 6 distortion pedals, which allow them to have a huge amount of harsh noise, they can move and act, and (not the least...) travel the world with a very small and light gear.

EL: Well the weak vibrations of many solid objects wouldn't be audible without a contact mike. It makes so many more materials and objects available for **sonic exploration**, be they discarded or not. It's interesting to me because this also stretches the definition of an instrument.

What your friends in Cock ESP do makes me think about not only using readily available objects and materials specific to the site of a performance, but also **amplifying the performance space** itself; the stage, the floors, the windows.... If you think of a room as an acoustic resonator, like a free improvisation, each concert will be unique to and determined by that site. And so the room can be used as a temporary instrument.

After I perform sometimes people ask me why I made this "thing." For me it's a strange question because I imagine, or would hope, that its sounds and the way I use them make the reason self-evident. But, I suppose the question deserves to be asked because I use trash, very basic and insignificant things to make sounds that do touch people in unexpected ways. If one is not familiar with the history of avant-garde art and non-western, or "folk" instruments, it will seem absurd, maybe even threatening.

Or maybe people wonder why I like these sounds, or why I play them in the way I do. I know people are surprised by it just like I was that very first time: How can something so common and ugly make such intriguing sounds? I usually explain that percussionists have been using hubcaps and other everyday objects to make interesting sounds for a long time. There's usually no time to engage about the philosophical implications.

It requires technique and practice. I played drums long ago and I have been playing the Springboard for six years. So I have learned what the objects or materials I've selected for the Springboard can allow me do. The more potential an object or material yields, the more I'll work with it. It's a physical process, no different from learning how to achieve a "good tone" or technique with a traditional instrument, except that these objects are not designed for music.

Learning how to use it was a long trial and error process at first. This meant that I had meet it on its own terms: learn special techniques; how to control a violin bow and later a cello bow. I modified brushes to get the right percussive sounds, and I learned how to use my fingers to drum on it. And as I mastered these materials and techniques, I added new objects, repositioned other ones; broke some and dispensed with others. So in the beginning years the Springboard changed a lot.

Am I rambling on too much? If you don't mind, I think this experience reconnects me to the physical pleasure of drawing, which I stopped doing a long time ago. I learned a new word the other day, haptic, which means understanding or communicating by touch rather than seeing, or some other sense. I can feel the pencil and it's pressure on the paper through in my hand. It's the same with an acoustic instrument. The actions of your hand or whatever part you use to play, vibrates you immediately and you can feel the material respond back. It's not just in the ears. You could say my Springboard experience has taught me how to hold something in my hand and feel its general sound character.

AAJ: How does a self-built instrument influence your way of playing? And do you think somebody could play an instrument built by another person with the same deep understanding? (More or less I'm asking: what's the relationship between the builder and the musician, if that's not the same person?)

EL: The Springboard definitely influenced my way of playing. I couldn't play it like a drum. Hitting the Springboard with a drumstick makes a very loud and uninteresting sound. Unlike the electronic instruments I was using before its invention, it has no keyboard, keypad, buttons, LCD display, and recently, only one knob instead of dozens. In other words, I was unencumbered by

the constraints of standardized musical instrument interfaces, by the need for programming, complicated signal routes, tunings, etc. There was no standard repertoire to influence me. The Springboard had no history and it wasn't precious. So I had no worries about making the wrong sound or harming the instrument.

AAJ: This is interesting. I've seen that you have in your record collection an album by Hans Reichel (the world-famous inventor of the daxophone) in which he plays an operetta for daxophone. I heard many others records by him, and that one has been weird to listen to, because it's like as if he tried to bring the sounds of his particular instrument back to the "old" music. I think a new instrument should be investigated for its possibilities to create new musics. What do you think about this? (I was thinking also about the first theremin performances, trying to reach the perfect pitch and play some classical music melodies and so on...)

EL: I don't think there is necessarily anything wrong with old things, but I do agree with you. I made a new instrument to explore sounds that were new to me. And these sounds enabled me to make a kind of music I hadn't before in terms of its form, structure, timbres, rhythms, etc. But I'm not a purist either, and so with **Hans Reichel's** operettas I appreciate the perverse humor of it, and I'm sure he's fully aware of its irony. When you listen and watch those tapes of **Theremin** and Clara Rockmore performing classical music on the theremin it's kitsch, pure and simple.

The Springboard has also changed my way of playing for the obvious reason that these sounds presented me with musical, compositional, and aesthetic challenges. Some were easier to use than others. These sounds make you more aware of your own biases and tastes, as well as you're your physical abilities.

I have spent years working with them. I suppose that's why I haven't built a lot of instruments. This one alone still has so much I need to master yet. Which brings up an important point. I didn't make the Springboard with a predetermined sound in mind, like a particular scale or tuning, or to improve on preexisting designs. I just wanted to find out what an amplified coil spring sounded like. In fact, I wasn't intending to make an instrument. It's just what evolved. Regarding your second question, if the builder is also the player he or she will always have a more intimate knowledge of the instrument's sonic possibilities. The builder has that advantage initially, but that doesn't mean someone else can't learn what these possibilities are, and even surpass the builder's knowledge. It all depends on how much time one wants to spend playing the instrument.

However, making your own instrument provides a deeper sense of satisfaction than playing one that is made by someone else, especially one that's mass-produced. And so I think it's most likely that the builder will also be the instrument's best player.

AAJ: The improvisation mentality and attitude normally enables very different people to work together. Do you think that this "language" can now be considered as too old, ...as a language that has exhausted its possibilities?

EL: If you think of it as a language and not a style, improvisation can't be exhausted. It's elementary to human action. Attitudes and styles will always change, and are changing to suit the needs of people. People get old, and their ideas can become exhausted, but ideas and people are also renewed.

My friend **Jack Wright** said he thought of improvisation as relationship in sound between people and environment. I understand the people part of the equation and I'm intrigued by the

environment part. I could add that **improvisation** is way of working, a method. For me it is synonymous with the creative process, be it applied to art or any other form of human activity. Jack also said we are well connected in most of this playing, and when we are not we know it. That is true for me. It can be disappointing when I'm not connecting, because this relationship depends on trust-in my improvising partners as well as myself.

When I improvise with people I have never played with before, in a public performance, I feel as if I'm taking a big risk. It is a test of your abilities to understand the temperament or style of another person in an instant. I have to be an artist and critic without thinking. I have to respond to my errors or misinterpretations immediately-without regret or reflection-and go on. Improvisation is about acting without time for thinking. I'm receiving and transmitting instantaneously. My action is physical while my listening and interpreting happens on a pre-cognitive level.

I could say more, but maybe I am becoming pedantic now.

AAJ: Is there any kind of sound you feel more adequate to dialogue with when you play on the springboard? I mean, voice, guitars, drums, synth... or it's just a matter of who's the other person?

EL: I've played with all kinds of instrumentalists, except for piano, and so far I don't think there are any sounds-acoustic or electronic-that the Springboard sound can't work with. My relationship to a fellow player makes the difference. My instrument can do things that **traditional instruments** don't and vice versa. It has its limitations and its unique strengths. So it's always important that whomever I play with we listen deeply and openly to our similarities and differences. That applies not only the physical characteristics of the sounds themselves, but also to the way we're using them. Some people improvisers are interested in a musical interaction modeled on or even mimicking a verbal dialogue, others are not at all.

Eric Leonardson's Homepage, pages.ripco.net/~eleon

This article is published courtesy of All About Jazz Italia: www.allaboutjazz.com/italy

The Fraternal Disorder of Noise

by Ben Portis

(delivered at the Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium, Sept. 8, 1999)

"

This is a report on the **No Music Festival**, a new noise-based formulation of the radical-music festival which has run in two annual editions since 1998 in nearby London, Ontario. Before heading into an artistic consideration of **No Music**, it is important to say something about the nature of this festival's accomplishment. Even disregarding the critical reception to **No Music**-- and the critical response has been emphatic and exhilarated -- the festival has been a huge success, measured along the less definable terms of locality. London is prosperous, sophisticated, and discriminating, a cautious city in which it has been famously difficult to foster support for the unproven, especially in the arts. Improbably, the **No Music Festival** has managed to puncture this conservatism. It attracts a primarily local audience in impressive numbers, especially given the suspicions attached to noise and its underground status virtually everywhere. **No Music** has not only cultivated its own identity and specificity, but furthermore everyone in attendance has grasped that the aberrant, nefarious, and splintered forms of noise undergo an onsite reconstruction at the festival, to be seen anew as creative, conversant, and deeply expressive of human feeling.

The grassroots topology of the No Music Festival developed as organically and is as deeply imbedded in its (unlikely) host community as is its centerpiece group, **the Nihilist Spasm Band**. The band formed in 1965 in a flourishing visual-arts-dominated cultural enclave within London. For most of its existence it has been regarded as an eccentric artists' repudiation of musical conventions. This perception has been underscored by the conspicuous presence of important artists within its membership,

notably Greg Curnoe, Murray Favro, and John Boyle. The reputations of these individuals in the field of Canadian painting and sculpture miscast them as leaders within the NSB and also distorted the centrality of the Spasm Band within the creative lives of all of its members, for whom it was assumed to be a side project or an avocation (in either case a misreading of purpose).

Since the mid-90's, the prejudices which adhered to the NSB began to fall away. In 1992, the unexpected death of Curnoe, its most visible and charismatic member, led to a surprise non-event: the continued activity of the band. Just prior to this, the NSB had been contacted by Alchemy Records of Osaka, Japan, which perceived in the Spasm Band's three obscure early LPs of 1968, 1978 and 1985, precursors to the ardent Japanese noise subculture promoted by the label. Alchemy eventually re-released all of the historic NSB records and added three CDs of new material to the discography. Timely and effective distribution of these records put the band before a worldwide audience of new listeners, which included musicians. In 1997, the NSB gave its first performances in the USA and Japan. Yet, as the band was being discovered and celebrated around the world, its anachronistic reputation as amateurs persisted in London and Southern Ontario.

The **No Music Festival** was conceived in 1997 to rehabilitate and reconcile the band to its beloved hometown. It was also intended to reciprocate the artistic forays the NSB had taken to such locales as Tokyo, Osaka, Chicago, and New York and introduce representative musicians and anti-musicians from those cities on the NSB's own turf. Most importantly, the festival symbolically synthesized a coherence and exchange within the highly disparate and various realm of practice loosely termed noise. Every participant was pushed out of his own biases and isolations. The prejudices surrounding noise -- deviant, anti-social, negative, monolithic -- were refuted and reversed. Noise was demonstrated to be an intensively creative field which called upon new musical skills and demanded new modes of listening. Noise showed itself to be a mode of sustenance. As NSB-member John Boyle observed: "In a sense the No Music Festival was post-nihilistic because it was totally constructive, forging a new sonic language from the

rubble of the old order. Best of all, the collaborative intensity was so much fun for the participants that the usual barriers of communication -- showmanship, posturing, musical biases, even the space between the performers and the audience -- completely disappeared".

What are we referring to here as noise? There are several features to noise music that would seem to be requisite, except when they are not. Amplification has become a pervasive fact in the modern presentation of music. It is an obvious precondition. For noise artists the amplifier (and the several intermediary pedals and effects between note and noise) cease to be agents of transmission, but rather a total instrument system. Distortion and feedback are developed into an extreme force which the confronts the musician himself (and his fellow performers) as much as the listener. (Exceptions swiftly arise: each edition of No Music included performers -- Van's Peppy Syncopators in 1998, Fred Van Hove/Ken Vandermark in 1999 -- who utilized the immediate acoustic opportunities of the Aeolian Hall venue, which customarily houses a chamber music society.) Noise also can be said to essentialize elements of hard rock, removing the song base, the rhythms, the patterns, the integration, and the method. That naked sound might receive a spontaneous ensemble treatment, associated with jazz and improvised music, while jettisoning tradition, individuation, and chordal and metric substructures. However, the **Nihilist Spasm Band** (whose members in 1965 were already well-acquainted with the burgeoning free jazz of Ayler, Shepp, and company) confounded any analogies between its music and "new thing" jazz made for the sake of categorization. Perhaps it is best to proceed with a statement as to what noise clearly is not. Noise is not silence! (But it can be quiet.) Performers at the first **1998 No Music Festival**, in addition to the NSB, included Thurston Moore and Alan Licht from New York; Terri Kapsalis, John Corbett, and Hal Rammel (together known as Van's Peppy Syncopators) from the Chicago-Milwaukee axis; Knurl from Toronto; and Aya Ohnishi, Junko, and Jojo Hiroshige from Osaka. (Besides being a guitarist, Jojo is president of Alchemy Records.) The festival was intended as a one-off, but it proved so inspiring that everyone immediately agreed that it must be

done again. Fortunately, Tim Glasgow and Jason Bellchamber had the foresight to record every note of the festival performances. Doubly fortunate, those recordings turned out well and confirmed what everyone suspected. The complete festival recordings were independently released on the tiny London label, Entartete Kunst. The never-quite-titled 6-CD box set has become a second-generation phenomenon, reaching well beyond the brevity of the original event. Over the past six months, it has been championed by music critics around the world, both as a thing in itself and for indicating, more so than the Spasm Band's own releases, the persisting relevance of the NSB.

Repeated listening to those recordings reveals dynamics overlooked at the original moment. Having worked with the NSB over an extended period, having heard at close range the elements of its anti-music, had eased me into a premature assumption of getting the **Spasm Band**. During **No Music**, the apparent familiarity of the NSB's own concert seemed to be the part of the festival which conformed most with my expectations. Eventually and not so long ago I sat down with it again. Of course, there much that I had come to know well: the faltering pedagogic sonority of Bill Exley's pronouncements and recitations; the signature footfall of Hugh McIntyre (as truly a "walking" bass sound as can be imagined); the scraping glide of Art Pratten's bow upon a violin reinvented and electrified with guitar strings and pickups; the buggy, red-in-the-face reverb of John Boyle's amplified kazoo; and so on. These are simple identifications, the handiest cues picked out of the collective hubbub of the band's performance. What fixity might be found in this din results more from its ongoing conversation, within which points are frequently restated. Over the years, the NSB has adopted certain habits and a self-styled internal etiquette (which can be as undecorous as parliamentary procedure) to facilitate everyone's close listening to one another.

Midway through its festival concert, the **Spasm Band** began to rotate its members out to create space onstage for guest players. Welcomed first was Thurston Moore, a courteous gesture extended to a fellow noisician. In the recording, however, one discovers a jarring additive which was absent only moments earlier, the

expertise and mastery of the guest. Although Moore's playing betrayed neither ego nor stylistic predilection, it nonetheless disrupted the code of conversation. In response, the playing of those **Spasm Band** members left onstage (Boyle on kazoo, Favro on guitar, Pratten on violin, and John Clement on drums) swelled to a furious level, swarmed all over Moore and, in a very curious fashion, forced the discussion to proceed on equal terms. In a remarkable instant, the NSB met the sudden introduction of skill with a brazen display of its own musical powers, exhibition of which is not usually important to the scheme of things.

Again and again, NSB members speak of naivete as their point of grace, as a singular quality which never fails to sustain their interest. This is a difficult claim to apprehend but the one which is probably at the heart of the Spasm Band's stance of refusal. Innocence lost is irretrievable. Perhaps the ultimate noise is a baby's cry. It shatters even the busiest moment like nothing else. The cry is raw personality and so to is the playing of the **Nihilist Spasm Band**. Its perennial quest for ignorant, undisciplined sound is its hallmark and the probable reason for the great wake of offense which has trailed the band's long and oblivious history. Naiveté has no flourish. The band's adoption of various instruments has served foremost the direct needs of its constituent personalities. Through the crudest of sound, the relatively unmediated expression of experience, feeling, and imagination is another basic quality of noise music.

After the overt guitarism of the 1998 festival, the second edition of **No Music** moved onto a broader instrumental plain: Michael Snow played piano, Fender Rhodes, and CAT synthesizer; Fred Van Hove played pipe organ, accordion, and piano; Ken Vandermark played tenor saxophone and clarinet; Borbetomagus's Jim Sauter and Don Dietrich played a variety of amplified saxophones; and Jim O'Rourke played his Powerbook. Guitarists (and drummers) still remained in abundance: Alan Licht; Jason Bellchamber; Unclean Wiener's Galen Curnoe and Shawn Bristow; Eric Chenaux; Kurt Newman; Donald Miller; and Jon Borges, a 14-year-old from Tulare, California making his first public appearance anywhere. The NSB bridged the two realms of non-rock and non-jazz grouping. Despite the inclusion of artists who

epitomize contemporary musicianship and virtuosity, such as Van Hove and Vandermark, the performances (especially the late-night sessions, where participants struck up impromptu configurations for a single short improvisation) were often woolly affairs, skirting the inner edge of entropy. In this respect everyone moved closer to the emotive compulsion of noise.

The "politics" of the **No Music Festival** has been an openly pursued agreement to disagree and a suspension of hierarchy. This is quite idealistic and difficult to imagine without the musicians at its core, the **Nihilist Spasm Band**, whose artistic outpost implies a code of civility within the band and into its community. The No Music CDs are so affirming because they capture a living activity rather than a "live" energy. They reveal creativity conducted in the civic sphere and propose noise as a good thing offering both personal pleasure and mutual support.

<u>The Art of Binaural Location Performance</u>	Dallas Simpson
--	-----------------------

-- not found, sorry ---

Pluralism in Progress

*England - the place for radical
improvised music.*

By [Carl Bergstroem-Nielsen](#)

2004

This article is about new improvised English music - its historical basis, it's radical and independent character, the interest in environmental sound on the side of musicians, it's organizations and it's social and musical pluralism. It is a revised version of a radio program sent by German Deutschlandfunk in October 1998.

One historical basic phenomenon was the rising of a specific European jazz in the sixties. One can mention names like Peter Brötzmann, Alexander von Schlippenbach, Derek Bailey and Evan Parker as examples of well known pioneers. Although European jazz retained some of the sound and rhythm of original jazz, the avant-gardists did not make use of its fixed scales and song forms. Instead, collective improvisation became increasingly important.

Starting from European jazz, a freely improvised music developed step by step in which jazz became just one among more influences. An interesting, complex picture of things arises here. The German musicologist Bert Noglik proposed that the interactive aspect in improvised music, i.e. musicians reacting to each others' playing, came from jazz. On the other hand, exploration of sound should be regarded as something coming from composed new music. This is not totally wrong although it is also a generalization. However this state of affairs, improvised music has the privilege of being heir to both elements.

In several respects, England has a conservative image, and this is true for its composed music as well. But it is a fact that the English are not afraid of rough and unpolished sounds in improvised music.

That improvised English music is in fact so radical could be seen as a dialectical necessity, for the lack of a better explanation. In all cases, it can easily be pointed out that England has a whole line-up of independent, de-central organizations: musician-run concert organizations, record labels, and festivals. Even an charity organization for music teaching by self-employed teachers can be found.

Now I would like to go back in history. From 1969 and on the "Scratch Orchestra" was an astonishingly well functioning social music phenomenon, a whole music culture in itself. It was founded by Cornelius Cardew, a teacher of composition at the London Morley College at that time. For the Scratch Orchestra, Anglo-Saxon experimental music was the most important source of inspiration, not jazz. The name "Scratch Orchestra" implies the idea of starting from scratch. It had between thirty and forty members, among them were professional musicians, other kinds of performing artists, and amateurs who went to the rehearsals not only just to prepare music for concerts, but also enjoyed it as a social event. The orchestra had it's own special music genres, and everybody participated creatively. "Compositions" might be made by non-members. For instance Christian Wolff who for some time lived in London and whose ideas were close to those of the Scratch Orchestra.

"Scratch Music" was a special kind of community music-making taking place according to the participant's own quite individual recipes. It constituted an introduction to the rehearsals which was carried on until everybody had arrived and were ready to go on. Everybody was playing at the same time according to own verbal or graphic introductions. In so doing, a quiet music was supposed to be produced in which everybody accompanied everybody else.

Another genre of the "Scratch Orchestra" which fused a jolly popular atmosphere with avant-garde boldness in a singular way was the "Popular Classics". In these a short excerpt, a particle from well-known, often classical music, was played. The resulting music sounded like a parody or a joke - but it was in fact a seriously meant activity in which participants on one side attempted to play the music correctly and at the same time accepted everything that happened in the process.

The "Scratch Orchestra" ended its activities in 1973. But other English musical phenomena followed. Two years later a magazine with the name *Musics* appeared. *Musics Magazine* published articles on improvised music, reviews of concerts and recordings (among them many Trans Mused tapes), invitations to contribute to various publications and information about events all over England. Since 1973 it began to inform about the "London Musician's Collective".

The musicians' co-operative "London Musicians' Collective" in 1978 set the framework for the festival "Music/Context". In Michael Parsons' "Canal Project" the context was the special environment one could experience when walking by a canal in the neighborhood. With Steve Cripps at the same festival, the context was the sound of an electrical welding machine - Cripps played the welding machine and a clarinette at the same time.

genres. Musicians and composers influence each other and cooperate in new ways, and this attacks old concepts of artistic property.

One more yearly festival dates back to 1976. It is called "Company Week" and is still organized by the grand old man guitarist Derek Bailey. The basic idea of this, to invite many musicians from near and far and let them play in changing constellations is as simple as it is effective. Many of them have never played together before.

Before I end this going through the organizations and their history, I would like to mention that there are many record companies publishing improvised music, solely or for a great part. For instance, Acta, Bead, Bruce's Fingers, Emanem, Incus, Leo, Matchless, Scatter, Quarz, 2:13, Rastascan...

Just like improvised music has its own institutions in England, musicians also work independently of traditional educational institutions. Some are radical auto-didacts. David Toop for instance has acquired much of his musical education by improvising outdoors. - Phil Minton has, by contrast, developed his very special voice indoors, within the context of noisy printing machines.

Often, noises and sound structures replace tones and melody phrases in English improvised music. Radical attitudes concerning instruments can also lead to invention of new instruments. The so-called "pyrophones" of the "Bow Gamelan Orchestra" function for instance on the LP "Great Noises that fill the Air" from 1988 with the aid of burning fire...

One could define pluralism as the co-existence of individual elements. Styles and directions interpenetrate, but do not cancel each other. In London I have experienced both that improvised music has its own special public and that people might also come just for curiosity or because time and place suited them. One can view all this as positive effects resulting from a pluralistic attitude of the city. Individuals and groups are themselves, but at the same time they tolerate each other.

Art is, however, a public contemplation and working on the solution of conflicts, as the psychologist C.G.Jung once said. One can work on the conflicts in a playful, creative and thoughtfully reflecting manner. That which we call polyphony in music has its roots in the simultaneous activity of several musicians. When we hear a composition, then the interaction has already taken place and only in the fantasy of the composer. But in improvised music this is immediately achieved by those who play. And it is a special attraction for the listeners. Contrasts between players may lead to frustration or fighting or discussion. Maybe a new balance arises, maybe an interesting new unbalance. It is a real polyphony instead of an imaginary one.

I already mentioned the festival "Company Week" where musicians play in various constellations. Here, pluralism is so to speak made into a system. There is an ever open field

for surprises and possible interactions. There is one more yearly festival which since 1993 does a similar thing in a more condensed form, "Relay". Three trios begin to play at three different venues in the same part of town. Ten minutes later four more musicians join in the various groups. Every time a new musician joins a group, another musician must leave. So the constellations change all the time during the three hours of the event. The critic Ben Watson described the music of Relay 1995 as pluralistic in the sense that he heard both chamber music qualities in it as well as coarse-sounding manifestations reminiscent of certain popular genres.

Inspirations from jazz, from new music and more. Independent organizations and musicians. Ongoing pluralism - those have been keywords in this article. I believe the radicality of English improvised music will endure, even through changing generations. One can only recommend those interested to take an explorative trip to London. Be sure to check the events calendar on the web at www.l-m-c.org.uk.

Go North, Son!

An experiential narrative about the travels of a musician

By Nisha Feigin 2004

Misha Feigin was born and raised in Moscow, acclaimed as one of the best guitarists and songwriters in Russia. He left behind in Moscow an established folk-music career hall-marked by four albums released on Russian Melodiya label, major radio, television shows, national and international tours, and publications in various magazines. The Russian independent radio station "Echo of Moscow" ended threedays of emergency broadcasting after the failed coup in August 1991 with Misha's song, "Gulp of Freedom".

Since coming to the United States, Misha has performed original and traditional Russian & American music in both English and Russian in concerts for over 300,000 young people in schools and universities. He has played in numerous folk festivals and concerts in 47 states in Canada, and in Europe in hopes of bringing people of all cultures together through music.

Having settled in Louisville, Kentucky he became an active improviser in guitar and vocals, working with with Joee Conroy and Gregory Ackerman of UT Gret. Launching out as an improviser on his own, he has performed in the Birmingham International Improv Festival and others around the country. After eight years in the United States, Misha longed to take his music back to Europe as an improviser. This story is his account and experiences from the trip he made in the Spring of 1988 from Louisville, back to Europe.

A few months later after my return from Europe, the tour I made felt already like a very pleasant, but distant dream. . .

After spending months working to make this dream into a reality, I left Louisville with anticipation and enthusiasm about the journey back to Europe. I played 15 concerts all the way from Zurich to Oslo, meeting many fascinating people in the process. But it was what seemed to be an "impossible dream" had actually became a truly possible dream, and perhaps a possible dream for any motivated improviser, who is ready to start working on it!

It makes sense that the place to start is by organizing contacts and booking. That is not an easy job, and many people do not really know how to begin. I hope that my story will be an encouragement to those who have a dream to travel and play and an inspiration to do it. Usually

things develop one step at a time, like building a trail. It makes sense to ask the people who have organized a gig for you, as well as musicians you play with, for contacts which they know. You collect them, and make a list of them all, and start where you have the most.

Last year, such a place for me was Germany. I've heard these somewhat fantastic remarks about the improvising scene in Germany from many American and British players. "Oh, in Germany, people really appreciate the new music. They pay real money for playing it, and they have plenty of gigs." That sounding inspiring enough, in October of 1997, I developed a list of forty or so contacts in Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden, and I began the process.

I started by sending my musical biography with the description of my music. Two or three weeks later, I called everybody and asked if they would be interested to receive a tape from me. Almost everybody said yes, in quite good English. I sent my demos, and started calling again a month later. Reaching people who book concerts overseas by telephone is a tedious and expensive thing. The time difference, uncertain schedules, and so on, but it was easier for me to do booking in Germany, than in America. This was because the German organizers were not afraid to tell me a straight no, when they could not, or did not want to book me. It saved me a lot of money on telephone calls, and some peace of mind.

A similar experience in my first year, in the USA was very frustrating because everybody was so nice to me on the telephone, and never said no, just- "call me next week", or "I'll call you later". Then of course, nothing happened. Thankfully, Germans were much more simple to work with. People who didn't book me would frequently give me other contacts to try. So after two or three rounds of calls, I'd start to receive the first positive connections. And at the same time, it became very

clear that I wouldn't be able to connect all my gigs with a straight line on the map.

On the Road

In Europe you can enjoy all the pleasures and benefits of excellent public transportation. I recommend buying a Europass, or any of the local discount train passes. Then you just walk on the train, a fast one, and settle into a comfortable seat for enjoying views from the window, and perhaps a sandwich, and a beer. A few hours later, you will walk out of the train in a different country. It is an easy travel experience, indeed, if you are careful enough not to hurt your back in an attempt to squeeze an overstuffed bag in the overhead storage on the train. Just take it easy!

My first stop in Germany was Bielefeld, a city of 400,000 people 300 kilometers north from Frankfurt. The venue I played was called the "Bunker". It was an actual underground WW2 bunker converted into a performing space, a fine form of conversion. (It is typical in Germany now to find bunkers, and old WW2 vintage factory spaces recreated into clubs or art & music spaces--a common European approach to recycling outdated industrial architecture is to turn it over to the artists-ed.) At the Bunker they have all sorts of music and theatrical events, including one free-improvisation concert every month. My contact in Bielefeld, Erhard Hessling, was both an organizer and a fellow improvising musician, a typical combination for an artist in the improv-scene all over the world.

The performance set up at the Bunker felt a little strange. The audience is seated on the left and right flanks of the stage, and the performer plays facing the entrance without really seeing people in the room, rather sensing them. That way a temptation "to impress" your audience

just is not there. You just play music for yourself, and for the people whom you can feel, but not see in the close proximity.

There were seven or eight players who joined in improvisation at the end of the event. The audience in the Bunker felt receptive and knowledgeable of the genre. And that was true at most of the venues that I played in Germany.

In Hamburg I encountered a very active group of improvisors and new music fans, who organized improvisation gigs monthly in a nice, big loft. They also have a weekly Friday night two hour radio show on a small independent radio station. My contact, Heiner Metzger, was also my generous, caring host.

I can suggest to you if you travel--don't miss the East part of Germany! In economically depressed and politically disturbed Dresden (neo-Nazi's are there), I have found many people emotionally vibrant, responsive, and outspoken. Perhaps when you still live on the edge, not safe and satisfied completely yet, it's natural to be more creative and sensitive. Some resemblance (even in landscapes) with mother Russia was obvious. I spent a few very memorable days around Dresden with improviser and theoretical mathematician Gunther Heinz.

So much playing, walking, and talking! And a trombone player, Yohannes Frish organized an excellent concert in Karlsruhe in the South of Germany.

We met for the first time twenty minutes before the gig. Yohannes asked me after shaking my hand: "Would we play some now, or would we save it for the gig?" We saved it for the gig, of course. It's a quite remarkable event, to meet another player for the first time in music. You gently open channels for each other, and extend yourself musically

towards the other with respect and awareness. Then a miracle of communication and togetherness might occur. After you meet once, it will never be the same. With the new knowledge and awareness of each other, friendships are born.

In Zurich, Switzerland my concert was sponsored by WIM, a motivated group of local improvisors, who run a very well known concert series. They have an established space as well as an active radio station. The person who organized my concert was Christoph Gallio, a full-time musician well known for his saxophone style the work with his group, Day & Taxi. It is a privilege, not so many improvisors around the world can exalt. So many of us, even the best, stay on the margin, and sometimes have to perform strange and unrelated jobs to support our earthly existence.

In Bern, I was fortunate to share the gig with Eugene Chadbourne. We played at the Reitschule, a quit interesting, peculiar venue, some sort of squatters community. For that one, contact Sandro Wiedmar.

Free improvisation is taken quite seriously in Germany and Switzerland, and it is not considered elitist or extreme from other styles of music, jazz in particular. There are a good number of jazz clubs in Germany where free improvisation is also a regular part of the menu. There are German Jazz Club Directories, good to have for booking reference. German people are seasoned and good listeners, but their response to anything they consider schmaltsy will be very straight in your face. So you better be good. And another warning: don't expect people from the audience to come to the stage after the show, and shake your hand or hug you, even after ovations and encores. They just don't do it!

Once again my experience has proven what everybody else knows already: that the Germans can organize things! In many cities, and even

in towns not bigger than 10,000, you can find groups of people, both musicians and listeners, who put on improv concerts on a regular basis, one or two times a month. Often they manage to get funding from the government, but the money that can be collected at the door in most places is quite reasonable, because promotion and attendance at new music concerts is good in northern Europe, at least in my experience.

For instance, in the little town of Hofheim near Frankfurt, my concert was organized by Esther Arvay, a devoted new music fan.

I saw concert posters practically on every corner, and we got 60-70 people at the gig. I can't imagine anything close to that in any small, or even in a reasonably big town here in the United States. That was a really impressive display of the community appreciation of music.

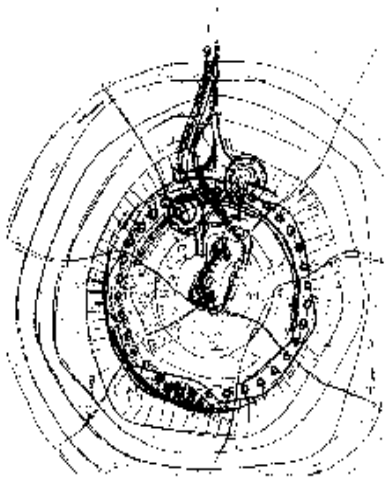
I also suggest that the relative success of new music in Germany has something to do with the public attitude to music in general. What we call classical music is rather treated like folk music in that country. How else can you perceive it, when every second person can sit in with a quartet playing Brahms, and in the schools almost everybody experiences playing in the orchestra? People don't consider new music and free improvisation as something weird, just an extension in the evolution of music. They hear it just like any other genre, judge good from bad, and they let you know immediately if they think it is boring!

In my journey to the North I made it to Sweden, where in the little town called Kungälv near Göteborg a couple of improvisors, Biggi Vinkeloe and Peeter Uuskyla, keep the genre alive and well. They have a number of venues which they can access for producing touring folk, including a gig on a beautiful little island!

Going North, why bother?

If you keep up with the spirit of adventure and discovery, you have to cross the borders. And after you cross them, you might realize the borders are not really real. Going north, I encountered yet one more time the world community of improvisors, a global improv village. I felt myself at home there. It doesn't really matter what town, country, or continent. I feel at home, anywhere I go. People shared with me their homes, ideas, food, and music. A few deep friendships began. I see the world map differently now: Here, in the middle of Europe- Gunther, down below- Ute and Gerhard, all the way up- Biggi, Peeter. Good friendship is perhaps one of the few stabilities in our world of relativity.

Every new encounter with a good improviser extended my relationships, musical vocabulary and technique, and gave me very unique and pure joy. Every new connection I made with people by the means of music and beyond, extended my mind, heart, and spirit.



Improvising Across Borders

the symposium on improvisation

~a review and
personal account~

LaDonna Smith

It has taken a long time to digest exactly "what happened" at the historic meeting of scholars, educators and improvisation practitioners at the 1999 "Improvising Across Borders" symposium, brainchild of Dana Reason, hosted by University of California in San Diego. One thing is certain, in terms of discussion of the phenomena of improvisation, it's practice, it's history, it's implication on sociological relationships in multi-dimensional and intercultural musics, borders were not boundaries but quite the opposite: borders were diving boards upon which to enter the waters of meaning, relationships, and creativity. One purpose of the Symposium was to explore one of the most previously slighted, but critically important fundamentals in music creativity and it's true role in the shaping of musical traditions, styles, and current direction. The collective of panelists, artists, skeptics and practitioners merged their minds as well as their hearts in one of the most important meetings of the decade, to break down barriers and create dialog acknowledging improvisation as the true process to the imagination, and the common thread in all music.

For a complete synopsis of the subjects, explorations, and dissertation the abstracts of the papers are currently still located at <http://man104nfs.ucsd.edu/~mdessen/csep/abstracts.html> I suggest that genuinely interested parties print the entire 20 pages, sit down with a cup of tea or coffee, and read through each and every abstract to fully begin to digest in thumbnail sketch the magnitude and vast diversity of the subjects considered at this symposium, an undoubtedly overdue, but nevertheless magnificent bringing together of experts and sympathetic souls of the process.

Even more eloquent than the papers themselves were the lively discussions that followed in the panels where thought processes were shared freely in the moment. As well, the featured concerts, in which the process, and results of the process, was demonstrated through music improvisation which crossed the borders in time from music to theater, to poetry, and to movement. And certainly, as these 'Moments' communicated loudly the impact of pure psychic musical automatism, the oracle of musical



George Lewis greets Tom Nunn, Ingrid Monson looks on at the reception, April 11, 1999 at UCSD.

deliverance, the precious moments of shared witness were seen, heard, & felt on many levels in our recognition.

In short, we all arrived at the Symposium with our conceptualizations and contributions to share, with our minds and ears open to see and hear and exchange. We all left the Symposium, perhaps, as our primal leaders would leave the circle of peace in attitude of acknowledgement. In respect, in hope, in commitment for greater and continued understanding acknowledging the significance of the art of improvisation as the tool of human creativity. To permeate, to draw from the collective consciousness, the powers of creation, through which the great diversity of many minds, many hearts, and many hands bring meaningful experience; that is, thought, feeling, and process.

It was impossible to hear every speaker as papers were being delivered simultaneously in several locations. I will just bring out a sampling of a few of the significant remarks in the papers that I was able to hear in what was an overwhelming experience and saturation of improvisational hypothesis and information.



Guest with Douglas Ewart, Ajay Heble and Douglas Al-Maini

Particularly interesting to me was the report from Bob Boster on "Tablecore" which is a term he used to characterize a type of musical trend occurring which is the creative offspring of a younger generation of amateur music experimenters. What he had to offer was an extremely important example of the activity of today's youth. Engendering a direction away from the market control of youth, and towards a community of musical experimentation with a do-it-yourself aesthetic. Challenging from the hard-core rock scene to the amateur production of techno, noise, industrial, electro-acoustic, ambient, and home-made, sometimes "experimental", and non-idiomatic practice of improvisation, which is outside the idiom of jazz. These youth are doing *solely for the soul of playing for one's pleasure*, an underground bedroom music.

The music exists largely on the internet, and through 'tape trades', facilitated by internet communications. Most of the kids are active in other artistic activities. The practitioners range from true improvisation to pieces through composed by samples of other people's work, or created entirely on the computer keyboard as elements in a game.

Bob Boster states as well as poses the question, "These are youthful amateur practitioners and hobbyists. *Is it appropriate for an "outsider" art such as this not to be looked at* as much as the contemporary & academic forms of expression as a historic barometer of our times?" Hobbyists and informal art production is often ignored. The Entertainment Industry pressure

is trying to foster a consumptive audience. **In the face of the pressure to shut up and consume, these kids have to do this!** The work of these kids is a resource and inspiration for *cultural action!*

Bob Boster has conducted a survey of "Youth Tablecore" on the technical methods, generic association, improv vs. compositional methods, and outcomes expected from the kids and their output. He has compiled a number of email address and websites of kids involved in this music revolution. His work is extremely significant in recognizing the role of creativity and artistic expression in the every day lives of ordinary human individuals, especially the youth, and is an indicator of the potential social direction that can be spawned by *listening to the voices outside and beyond our own!* These are the voices of RIGHT NOW. This is not a study of a significant musical & social movement of the past, but one of the present and future.

Also, I found that in spite of the long and foreboding titles of many of the papers, most of the content was down to earth and engaging. One such was David Borgo's **The Art of Juggling and Thinking about the Laundry: Evan Parker, Embodiment, and Enactive Cognition**. Now, how's that for a title? At any rate, Borgo related many fine points that were easy to hear coming from the master saxophonist Evan Parker's mouth over his own playing approach, and spoke loudly to my own inspiration and spirit. I'll share a few here.

...Parker linking his own musical results from tongue, breath, and fingers

to create an illusion of polyphony on a monophonic instrument, a hyper-extension of the biological level of playing, which also includes circular breathing, recognizing that "the techniques are not the substance of the music, but its enabling factor." -E. Parker

...that the notes and the music are like the spokes of a spinning wheel. When it is moving, you can't count all of them, but they fit together and generate by their speed, the overall blur of vision, slur into harmony/polyphony. The music is NOT what you hear in an analysis. It's what you hear in the real time experiment. -D. Borgo

...like juggling, which is balancing objects and gravity, there are skills and risks involved.

Listening to bodily functioning taking over the music: the fingers, larynx, breathing, the mind in trance.

Borgo proposes the notion of the concept of *Embodiment* as including the body function. Going away from objective analysis embodied in history and shared psychological experience grounded in culture, into an experience of permanence and flux, process and reality, Borgo states that a circular causality doesn't explain the linear thrust that history gives us. As Evan Parker just puts it, "This is a new day, but it's got a lot in common with the day before."

Borgo refers to the dialectics from Cage's "Sound is just sound" vs. an African-American philosophy that "Interactions are personal and have meaning..." and proposes that the music of Evan Parker as an example of the bridging of the two.

Another paper, which I thought really stood out, almost evangelically for our age, was that of **Jason Stanyek, Articulating Intercultural Free Improvisation**. His paper based on interviews with participants of the Synergetics project included a diverse group of free improvisors from multi-dimensional and multi-cultural experience. In Stanyek's highly engaging discourse attempting to untangle some of the issues surrounding globalization and the notion of intercultural music making, he contends the notions of "intercultural" vs. "cultural is explaining nothing, just labeling. That sonic musical identity is not connected to a narrative origin, or a dehumanization of human sound. It is not connected with idioms, and he notes the violence that naming does to music and her ability to construct her own identity. That diversity is her best characteristic, making no limiting of musical richness. Stanyek concludes that free improvisation is "less a type of music with a definable sound-scape than it is a set of strategies deployed by musicians to engender a very inclusive space for music making." He furthermore, in exploring how power is employed within musical communities, (cultural imperialism, the global/local dichotomies) makes a grand case that due to its inclusive character, its openness, and recognition of diverse elements, that the practice of free improvisation provides a particularly fertile space for intercultural music making.

Of course, speaking of diversity, there was no limit to the range of subjects covered in the Symposium, everything from Improv & Technology, to discussions of Ornette and Bach, to "Jazz, the State Department and Africa". At least, an attempt to video-document each proposition and discussion was made by the Symposium staff. Perhaps in the future, a more inclusive account of the research and perceptions held will be forthcoming. To me, however, the mixing of musicians and scholars in the open forum discussions, which followed the papers, were even more inspiring and useful than the hypotheses and studies.

The following are just a few of the highlights from my notes of the lively panel discussions, which generated an enormous wakefulness in the halls. With communication through human conversation so stimulating, there

should no excuse for the dulling of human intelligence through the habitual and inane watching of television broadcasts, commonly referred to as "entertainment". (**...I like to think of the atmosphere of an old fashioned English round-table pub**, no disco, no loudspeakers masking the silence, a good beer and a good conversation.) These are excerpts from some of the discussions, and are examples of what the epitome of human entertainment can rise to. Please be aware that they are not necessarily direct quotes, as the speakers *always* are ahead of my hand. But I tried to catch what I could... In lively discussion, we can *simultaneously* think, have fun, be entertained, inspire, and enrich.

- **Sarita McCoy Gregory**, who gave a wonderful lecture on cultural and political implications of improvised music, makes the claim that **spontaneous music is perhaps based on nothing, and proposes the question, "Is this musical memory or musical amnesia?"**
- **Eddie Prevost** asserts that for him, in England, improvisation emerged as an alienation factor, **"How do we make a meaningful space out of our culture?"**
 - **Jonathan Glasier**: *I see the improviser as a wholistic musician...*
 - **Tom Nunn**: *Our tradition is imagination. For instance, how about a one hour concert on a coffee table?*
 - **Dana Reason**: *We come from different points of history and experience, but improvisation allows **any** entry level, building community, and you can enter without losing your tradition or your identity.*



Eddie Prevost with Symposium organizer, Dana Reason.

- **A discussion of the "next concert hall" being the web comes up. Pauline Oliveros mentions to everyone to check out www.turbulence.org and that on April 18, there will be a web improvisation.**
- **A discussion about the kids, the legacy and future of jazz, the Tablecore aspect, the aspect that kids ideas will always be different from the parents...**
- **Alvin Curran**: *these utopias have bobbed up on the sea of whatever. In living off of the alternative during the 60's, we created a tradition...and this tradition is in peril. Not only is it on a collision course with technology, which may be just England being behind....or whatever...but because of the enormous global strategies that are present in our society, the category of artists, musicians, and thinkers is endangered. We are an endangered species.*
- **Douglas Ewart**: *We must infect the children in such a way that we won't have to worry about it...tradition or a true current in musical practice.*
- **Alvin Curran**: *Think about the facts about the millennium, and the end of this century. We are leaving this amazing century where the most horrible things in history happened. And where the most amazing human feats also occurred...*

- ***Chris Williams (student):** When I heard "Improvisation Across Borders", I thought, "shouldn't we just grab an instrument and go down to the border right now!"Like building community, we're interested in the language of access, privilege, breaking down the walls, looking for ways to combat the realities...*
- ***Ron Robroy:** Even in the most tightly composed pieces, there are a multitude of insurrections going on. Leadership is ceded to another voice. And, there's the allusion of breathing.*
- ***Benneta Jules Rosette:** African art, writing and Music is based on improvisation. But here's the question, "What's on your mind when you're playing your music?" I explore, "what's on his mind?" Speaking as a sociologist, improvisation becomes a social necessity for people that are struggling, whether it is in a style of hip hop, african, or paris blend. Improvisation is a code of life. **The necessity to improvise is an absolute survival technique to organize the code of minority people with the code of dominant cultures***

The second discussion panel began with introductory remarks from each of the participants before open discussion commenced. By this time, I was really fatigued from writing, so the memories are even more fragmented, but here goes:

- ***David Antin:** (after a moving and hilarious account in celebration of the artistic life at its center; improvisation has the ability to attend to every circumstance) "....why shouldn't we invent as well as we can...Go on! Make it perfect! Instead of the attitude of...invent as well as you can under the circumstances. Most situations are available to do something in a human context, if you can get to a human context.*
- *...you know, in those days people didn't refer to us as African-Americans. People have referred to us as 'afro-this or that'. When I was growing up an Afro was a hairstyle! Words have meaning. Talk is cheap, and people talk in their sleep. They say, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Now picture this! When I was in Chicago some many years ago, and I was in a bad-ass gang, you know, that's where it was at, to be, then. Well, we used to see George...motioning towards George Lewis).... We used to see "little" George going down the street,....with his trombone....I was an old man then, and he was just a little boy....going down the street... to the University of Chicago.... And I thought to myself, "We should go down there and "kick that little fat boy's ass!" But something told me.... ? And NOW! Well. Now, I know **that George can kick ANYBODY's ass in here!** (laughter) (Mchaka Uba pulls an empty vodka bottle out of his back pocket) "You know, I've been thinkin about drinkin..." He introduced his wife. And at this point a taped musical interlude was presented with her singing a moving rendition over his delicious improvisational bass solo, "I've been thinking about drinking ...those blues away," which was a testament to how music can move the souls of everyone in the room.*



Guests with Pauline Oliveros and George Lewis

- *Catherine Sullivan, coming to us from the discipline of theater, began her presentation citing the problems with improvisation as pertaining only to her discipline, theater. She acknowledged its use as a means of developing material, saying that it was difficult to isolate the task of an actor, and that for an actor improv is considered to be the domain of "genius". The tools of an actor are emotional and psychological, and that their instrument is very different. That there is a need to "master". The work of it is in honing a sensitivity of people in a more democratic situation. She had questions as to whether improv was a cultural necessity or an artistic necessity, and as to "what is finally produced?". Furthermore, she asks, "is improv a fetish-i-zation of spontaneity? Is it anti technique? Does it have conventions and formulas?" **I got the impression that she had never worked with improvisation as a serious art form, and was in fact, afraid of it.***
- *Eleanor Antin, a conceptual artist and actress did much better with subversive activities, exploits and improvisational experiments! Concerning the issue of traditions and spontaneity, she had no problem with it. It was a matter of bringing it together. To bring it together "in a flash!" She had been in a women's group where they brought objects together to work with. They would build and make things, act around them, reach several climactic moments, then achieve an ending. Everybody knew when the ending was. She also told many entertaining and stunning accounts of her disguising herself in anachronistic characters and walking through town interacting as a Shakespearean man among other things. This woman was a riot! We all laughed so hard that we were in stitches! I don't know who is the funniest, she or her husband, David Antin. As always happens when presentations are engaging and funny, time runs out.*



Douglas Ewart and guest...

- *At some point in the discussion session, David Antin brought up upon the question of memory and improvisation that "memory is like crossing the street". It's crucial to existence to remember to look both ways. You've got to have skill, memory brings that. But you have to learn....and remain open.*

- ***Sociologist:** "All of these are culturally learned practices. You are participating in a reproduction where nothing will be new."*
- ***A teacher from the audience:** ...But there has been in Massachusetts an educational standard, which Congress has just set as a National Standard for education, that "every child must improvise". If you give eight kids who are six years old a pipe, a water faucet, an instrument, the children **WILL** improvise. They will create a composition.*
- *George Lewis (moderator): "We have brought up an enormous number of complex issues. We are in no way close to resolving, or even exploring those issues..."*

Finally, the Symposium had come to the moment we had all been waiting for...the keynote address to be given by Pauline Oliveros.

Quantum Improvisation: The Cybernetic Presence

by
Pauline Oliveros

*Keynote address presented at the Improvisation Across Borders conference
at University of California, San Diego April 11, 1999.*

Dedicated to the memory of Robert Erickson who encouraged us all to improvise.

*According to Ray Kurzweil in his new book *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence*:*

"In a hundred years there may be no clear distinction between humans and computers. There will be enormous augmentation of human perceptual and cognitive abilities through neural implant technology. Humans who do not use such implants are unable to participate in meaningful dialogue with those who do - knowledge is understood instantaneously through assimilated knowledge protocols. The goal of education and intelligent beings is discovering new knowledge to learn."

The speculations for the future in the Kurzweil book and others concerning self aware machines with the ability to reproduce into future generations with patterns of matter and energy that can perpetuate themselves and survive set me wondering. It's already evident that computers and human intelligence are merging. What would I want on a musician chip if I were to receive the benefit of neural implant technology? What kind of a 21st Century musician could I be? Humans with the aid of technology already see and hear far beyond the capability of the unaided senses. It's not long according to Kurzweil when such aids will be available at the personal level as implants like personal computers or digital assistants. All of us improvisers could have new input from this and new challenges. I'll return to the question of my musician chip after looking back a hundred years for some reminders and highlights:

The first magnetic recording came in 1899. One hundred years ago - Sound is recorded magnetically on wire and a thin metal strip. By 1900 The Gramophone Company advertised a choice of 5000 recordings. The human desire to record - to replicate and preserve resulted in 52,000 CD Titles produced in 1998!

Early Jazz Improvisation emerged after the civil war and emancipation. Improvisation developed in parallel with radio broadcast and recording technology. It is not surprising that all styles and forms of improvisation from historical to free have been empowered by recording. Recording is the memory and documentation of improvisation and testifies to an enormous creative effort by innumerable musicians. Musicianship for written forms of music has been empowered by recording as well.

The African aesthetic imposed on American and European dance music leads to the decade of the birth of the Blues and blues influenced jazz - 1920-30. Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith mothered this music and rose to short lived stardom as Blues queens during the migrations from the South to Northern metropolitan centers. Horn players of innumerable bands followed the lead of Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and other singers in a tremendous era of creativity and enterprize by people of African descent.

By 1930 60% of all American households have radios. Improvised music spreads out from recordings and radio broadcasts. Music by Americans of African descent is heard throughout the land and influences all of American music. This enormous creativity is recognized and appropriated by the white entertainment establishment. The black white exchange and interaction continues throughout the century and grows into the billion dollar music industry which exists today.

In 1953 the first consumer model Tape Recorders are available. This meant that musicians could record themselves at home or in their studios - a sound mirror is available to use anytime. Musicianship escalated with the aid of technology. Today's musicians are phenomenal in their performance skills in all styles of music improvised and written.

Currently another wave of creativity originating from 1970's Hip Hop sweeps world youth culture - influencing the whole world. All recordings are sources for improvisation. Rather than frozen historical objects recordings become live material through DJ scratching and re-mixing.

Classical music as taught in American establishment institutions and conservatories regards improvisation as a kind of craft, subordinate to the more prestigious art of composition. It's well known that Mozart as well as Beethoven improvised on their tours. Improvisation as a lost art was excluded from the curriculum and all but disappeared in America except for church organists and occasional cadenzas in concertos. The denial of the validity of improvisation has a racist tinge and origin. In America in the first half of this century improvisation grew mostly from Jazz and Blues - heart music of Americans of African descent - the disenfranchised. After 1950 improvisation appears in white avant garde music through the influence of marginalized indeterminate or aleatoric procedures, exposure to Jazz and Blues and to recordings and live imports of non-Western music - also disenfranchised music.

What's the purpose of creating music in performance without reference to memory or written form - improvisation ? The purpose varies according to the function of the music. One purpose is to enter into direct dialogue through sound with oneself and others. If the improvisation is creative then new mental and physical patterns could be born such as happened with Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor breaking away from Jazz traditions in the 50s and later Musica Electronica Viva, San Francisco Tape Music Center and AMN breaking away from classical music restrictions with improvisation. If the improvisation is historical such as replicating Charlie Parker, John Coltrane or the legacies of other great improvisers with no new elements then the purpose is to affirm a tradition.

The improvising musician has to let go of each moment and also simultaneously understand the implications of any moment of the music in progress as it emerges into being - In historical improvisation the course is charted or set by the conventions and codifications of the style - the Classicism of the music - In so called free improvisation nothing is known about the music before it happens - this edge is the challenge for human and for machine intelligence. Unless the styles of the musicians improvising were already absorbed by the machine then what information would there be to calculate a response? If the outcome is known in advance it is not free improvisation, it is historical improvisation.

What in fact does happen when a creative musician makes new music? How can it be new or free? What is it free of? What could be new about it? What is happening with a solo improvising musician? a group? The soloist gives herself feedback and enters a dialogue with herself and musical space - the group stretches the possibilities for dialogue and new relationships come about creating a myriad of new possibilities even though the course of the music - new as it may be - will flow with ineluctable inevitability. The recorded legacies of innumerable musicians are waiting to answer these questions.

What happens when a new musician chip is implanted in a human or a machine? All ranges are increased. Processing is possible beyond known present human capabilities. What could be heard? Could a new musical paradigm include a new spatial domain? Moments of local sound - moments of moving sound with the ability to detect locations from light years away - defining new interdimensional spatiality? What would a spatial melody sound like - a pitch beginning on Saturn moving to Aldeberon to Sirius to Earth? Space related frequency and amplitude - multidimensional melody - color/space/sound melody. Who would be playing this tune? Who would be listening and where? Melody across space stretched out and also happening everywhere simultaneously. Space is the place - I hear you Sun Ra!

According to the current issue of Scientific American in the article Is Space Finite by Luminet, Starkman and Weeks, "The universe may look infinitely large, but that could be an illusion. If space folds back on itself like the braids of a pretzel, it might be boundless, and light could spool around the cosmos endlessly.

The usual assumption is that the universe is, like a plane, simply connected, which means there is only one direct path for light to travel from a source to an observer. A simply connected Euclidean or hyperbolic universe would indeed be infinite. But the universe might instead be multiply connected, like a torus, in which case there are many different such paths. An observer would see multiple images of each galaxy and could easily misinterpret them as distinct galaxies in an endless space, much as a visitor to a mirrored room has the illusion of seeing a huge crowd."

What if we could sound out, hear and perceive the shape of the universe by bouncing sound around the torus? We don't have to be limited to the physical definitions of our perceptual ranges. What about imagination? Here is the challenge of the machine - the promise of hybrid human/machine forms through implants. The challenge of new beings with formidable powers of perception, memory, reasoning, and interpretation. Non carbon based beings created by humans to eventually replace humans. Are we creating new beings to replace humans or are we expanding our minds - making a quantum leap into the neo cortex to develop our own potential power?

In 1948 -Norbert Weiner coined the word "cybernetics" meaning the science of control and communication in the animal and machine. The cybernetic presence is definitely with us. Kurzweil says in his time line: "10 years from now (2009) human musicians routinely jam with cybernetic musicians" This is a shallow statement because there is no revelation concerning style, complexity or form. In fact many musicians are already improvising with machines programmed to respond to improvised input. Will Kurzweil's cybernetic musicians be self determining in 10 years?

In 1977 the first desktop computers from Apple are available. Musicians and Hobbyists continue to work out programs to make and play music now in their own studios away from Bell Labs, Princeton, Stanford and other institutions for computer music research.

Improvisation is also developing and merging with new forms of interaction made possible by machine intelligence. Computers expand the reach of solo as well as group improvisers. The work of Laurie Spiegel, David Behrman, Warren Burt, Joel Chadabe, George Lewis, Elliott Sharp, Jim Tenny, Deep Listening Band, Chris Brown, The Hub and many others comes to mind.

By 1990 Computer hard disc recording and editing is available. A powerful and revolutionary combination - the merging of recording and computing. What a wonderful tool for the creative musician.

"In 20 years virtual musicians with their own reputations are emerging". We need to know what constitutes a musician. How will humans with or without implants compete or collaborate with the cybernetic presence? I don't feel comfortable with the notion of surgical implants. I hope that some non invasive reversible form may be available.

"30 years from now direct neural pathways for high bandwidth connections to the human brain perfected. There will be a range of neural implants to enhance auditory and visual perception and interpretation, memory and reasoning". What would be enhanced? What and how would such powers be measured and valued and by whom? What about imagination? What kind of improvisation could and inevitably will result?

Music and especially improvised music is not a game of chess - Improvisation especially free improvisation could definitely represent another challenge to machine intelligence. It won't be the silicon linearity of intensive

calculation that makes improvisation wonderful. It is the non linear carbon chaos, the unpredictable turns of chance permutation, the meatiness, the warmth, the simple, profound, humanity of beings that brings presence and wonder to music.

We have looked one hundred years before and one hundred years ahead of this 1999 conference Improvisation Across Borders. Now for what I would want on my Musician Chip - what skills should the 21st Century musician have? What could she know?

In 1937 The Church-Turing Thesis stated that "All problems that humans can solve can be reduced to a set of algorithms, supporting the idea that machine intelligence and human intelligence are essentially equivalent".

Returning to the future Star Date 2336 we find a machine intelligence - minus human emotions that evidently don't reduce to a set of algorithms until lately - at work on the Star Ship Enterprise. Star Trek's android Lt. Commander Data is an imagining of the future predicted by the Church-Turing theory. Data solves problems and is a sentient life form with the same rights as other life forms. His ultimate storage capacity is 800 quadrillion bits and his total linear computation speed is 60 trillion operations per second. Data can remember every fact he is exposed to and can imitate voices so perfectly that he can even fool the computer of the Enterprise into thinking he is someone else. Star Trek's Data has performed as a classical musician on several episodes. His classical musician chip allows him to perform any music superbly having absorbed all known styles and all available recorded interpretations of written music. The musician who learns to perform classic forms and idioms is a conservative who affirms and preserves tradition. All of known music could be listened to, absorbed analyzed and interpreted by machine intelligence and be contained on a chip.

The composer is an organizer who designs and formalizes music prior to performance through notation. Computers already aid a variety of composer's design calculations. Computers can engage in rule based composition, calculate and realize musical forms.

Experiments in Musical Intelligence by David Cope describes the basic principles of analysis, pattern matching, object orientation and natural language processing. This system makes it possible to generate new compositions in the styles of various composers, from Bach and Mozart to Prokofiev and Scott Joplin. The program SARA (Simple Analytic Recombinant Algorithm) produces new compositions in the style of the music in its database. Already audiences are hard put to tell what music is composed by a human and what is composed by a machine. All known styles of composition could be contained on the composer chip.

Data could certainly handle all known styles of composition and historical improvisation. Improvisor: is a computer program that creates original music, written by Paul Hodgson, a British Jazz saxophone player. Improvisor can emulate styles ranging from Bach to Jazz greats Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker - historical improvisation. What about the improvising musician as an evolutionary? What would an improviser chip have to include for Data as a machine intelligence to engage in free improvisation? To boldly go where no musician has gone before sounding through dimensions of space - of time? Finding new sounds and new sound relationships?

Data could probably analyze all known instruments for instrument makers, all performance abilities for performers and all known musical forms for composers. The edge though is the unknown of imagination for performers, improvisers, composers and instrument makers and the unification of all these roles.

On my musician chip I would like the:-

- *Ability to recognize and identify instantaneously any frequency or combination of frequencies in any tuning, timbre in any tempo or rhythm, in any style of music or sound in any space.*
- *Ability to produce any frequency or sound in any tuning, timing, timbre, dynamic and articulation within the limits of the selected instruments or voices used. Maybe I would also like to morph from any instrument to any other instrument or voice. at will.*
- *Ability to recognize, identify and remember any music - its parts as well as the whole no matter the complexity.*
- *Ability to perceive and comprehend interdimensional spatiality.*
- *Ability to understand the relational wisdom that comprehends the nature of musical energy - it's form, parts and underlying spirituality - as the music develops in performance.*
- *Ability to perceive and comprehend the spiritual connection and interdependence of all beings and all creation as the basis and privilege of music making.*
- *Ability to create community and healing through music making.*
- *Ability to sound and perceive the far reaches of the universe much as whales*

sound and perceive the vastness of the oceans. This could set the stage for interdimensional galactic improvisations with yet unknown beings.

- *I suppose it would be great to be able to print it all out as well in 3D color.*

Are improvisers conscious? Do they have self perception, self awareness the ability to feel. What is conscious improvisation? For that matter what is unconscious improvisation? The body knows what to do even if the small mind does not comprehend. The body "dances" the music - the nerves fire and the mind notices slightly after it happens. Conscious improvisation involves strategy - responding strategically even if the outcome is unknown. A strategy of conscious improvisation might be - play only if you are listening - or trust the body to respond. This melds of course the notion of conscious/unconscious improvisation.

The capability of the human mind is unplumbed. We have far more capacity than we currently use in the neo cortex waiting for evolutionary expansion. Computers may actually instruct us in this process as we continue to merge with the machine intelligence that we are creating and improvisation interaction. We must decide though what a 50 year old structure of silicon is going to tell a five billion year old structure of carbon before making irreversible changes physically.

Quantum computing is a revolutionary method of computing based on quantum physics that uses the abilities of particles such as electrons to exist in more than one state at the same time. Quantum computation can operate simultaneously on a combination of seemingly incompatible inputs.

By analogy or metaphor Quantum Improvisation could mean a leap into new and ambiguous consciousness opening a new variety of choices. Ambiguous consciousness would mean the ability to perform in more than one mental state simultaneously in order to reach or bridge past and future as an expanding present. There could be new sound combinations anchored by increasing order even though choices might seem incompatible. Such a quantum leap could mean the utilization of more of the neo cortex the seat of creativity and problem solving. The newest part of the brain that is waiting to evolve in association with the limbic system - the amygdala - old brain and seat of the emotions. Quantum Improvisation could find new ways to express and understand the relationships between mind and matter.

Ordinarily we use only a relatively small percentage of the neo cortex - this reflects the style of most content oriented education in institutions, which limits or suppresses rather than encourages creative problem solving. After enormous growth spurts in the brain by age 16 many people are no longer interested in creativity. Education - content oriented education particularly - does not necessarily access the neo cortex - Rather there is the classic learning of forms - cortical learning - recognizable forms with no encouragement or support for innovation, which requires creative problem solving. This situation is particularly true of music. Performance of traditional music is rewarded and encouraged rather than acts of creation. Performance and creativity both could be rewarded and encouraged.

What is needed now is a complete program - an Improvatory of Music for pre K through Post Doc in aural music including all forms of improvisation and aural traditions to complement conservatories. As soon as possible young children could be encouraged to improvise and create their own music. They could be introduced to sound gathering and listening strategies. This program would not replace traditional music learning but would complement, enhance and make it possible for all people to participate in creative music making. An Improvatory would necessarily be interdisciplinary and include all the arts and technology.

There exists now 100 years of recordings of the complete range of improvisation from historical to free. This is an ample documentation, that could yield many fruitful studies for advanced degrees. Improvisational strategies

could be introduced early and advance through graduate levels. Here is one example of an improvisational strategy: "Only sound what has not been sounded before".

Once an improvisation has happened is recorded and studied it becomes historical. Too much replication can be destructive of creativity. Replication guarantees survival and perpetuation of form but It would be critical to hold the space for creative problem solving - An advanced problem to solve would be how to do this. Music teachers could encourage playing by ear as well as reading and writing music. The use of recording and computing could accelerate the learning of reading and writing music through intelligent courseware.

What would one learn at an Improvatory of Music?

- *Basic listening skills including the listening effect. Music only happens with conscious listening.- Maybe quantum listening -*
- *Listening in more than one state simultaneously. If you are not listening the music is not happening. A conscious observer is necessary. Conscious observation affects sound.*
- *Ways of sounding and listening - strategies.*
- *Starting from scratch - Music by any means possible (i.e. bottle caps, found objects)*
- *Sound ecology - what happens in the environment?*
- *Sound gathering through recording*
- *Sound sensitivity*
- *Sound provision with live feeds from sonically stimulating environments such as ponds, oceans, natural soundscapes , the weather and many other sources including industrial and urban sites.*
- *Sound as intelligence.*
- *Relational techniques or relationality*
- *Relational organization*
- *Informality*
- *Egalitarian ethics*
- *Political structures*
- *Evolving open form processes*
- *Computing - Computers may push us or teach us about the mind and facilitate a quantum leap into unity of consciousness.*

- *Technology especially tools for expanding the mind through listening. Instrumental research and development*
- *Acoustics*
- *Psychoacoustics*
- *Organizational strategy*

The place for an Improvatory requires an architecture that is supportive of the process - ideally. Chaos is a key resource in pushing evolution.- Meeting places might provide an appropriately chaotic environment with reconfigurable levels, color, textures, sonorous objects, acoustics, recording opportunities and open spaces. There could be many choices to make.

*This conference - **Improvising Across Borders** - brings a new dignity to a creative activity, which has been marginalized by the Western, established musical order. It is time now for an inclusive curriculum where improvised music is no longer ignored or denigrated. Borders should not only be crossed, but should dissolve. Degrees in both aural and written musics should be available equally. Aural music informs written music and vice versa. Improvisation is a key process for creative problem solving and the expansion of mind that is needed to meet the challenge of the machine intelligence that we are creating. Improvisation is creative problem solving and is a portal to quantum thinking - thinking in more than one state simultaneously.*

What is free improvisation? - nothing is known in advance of making the music. What's the algorithm for that condition? It may or may not be free of historical patterns or it may use historical patterns in new ways. Theoretically free improvisation is totally spontaneous like the big bang of creation. Maybe the big bang was the first and only free improvisation. Algorithms anyone? How about holding the possibility of the first unknown sound to begin an improvisation at an unknown time in a group of players who are all new to one another? Imagine then a crowd of creative people improvising together.

I thank the organizers for their courage and imagination.

-Pauline Oliveros

www.deeplistening.org

Quantum Improvisation: The Cybernetic Presence

reprinted by permission

Building Stronger Improvising Communities

by Dana Reason

As a practitioner of improvised music I am often concerned by the difficulty in locating journals, scholarly research, and academic curricula dedicated to the fields of improvised musics. Not only is it a task to get one's hands on these articles, but more often than not, many of the articles that surface are rather journalistic in their approach--which, for the most part does not allow the improvisers to really articulate concerns, visions, and political ideas embedded in or surrounding musical contexts because "good" journalism tends to focus on the romanticization of personal anecdotes to sell magazines.

Besides the apparent lack of available literature, perhaps it is improvisers themselves who are resisting the emergence of discourses. Speaking from my own experience, during rehearsals I occasionally stop playing in order to discuss the current music or experience. Although responses differ, many musicians express discomfort when playing stops and talking starts.

It may be that this is a question of gender, given that many of my ensemble experiences are with men. Of course, there are other possible sources of this resistance to discussion. For some, speaking about improvisation constitutes a betrayal of the gatekeepers of the practice, or of its practitioners. For others, there is a skepticism and mistrust about academicism.

Certainly no single answer can speak to the uniqueness of each individual's reticence, or provide an explanation for any discomfort. These attitudes, however, have made me question whether I was alone in thinking that "talking music" played an important role in advancing vital information about the art of improvisational practices.

I do wish to counter some of the more dominant naive mythologies that suggest that there is nothing to talk about regarding the subject of improvised music traditions or that improvised music just happens. Thus, my own need to discover others-- practitioners, philosophers, critical and political theorists who also shared a desire to exchange histories, theories, ideas, perceptions, and personal experiences beyond sonic articulation itself--provided the spark that ignited the Improvising Across Borders Symposium. I soon realized that my colleagues Michael Dessen, Jason Robinson, Sean Griffin, and Professor George E. Lewis, among others also shared my concerns, so we organized ourselves in preparation for the Symposium.

Along with over one hundred other participants in the weekend event, my colleagues and I quickly realized that we were not alone with our thoughts and that there indeed existed diverse, and vital communities that just needed an invitation to get together. Since I share many of LaDonna Smith's wonderful insights, and memorable highlights of the symposium, I will not provide a review. However, in my opinion the symposium is not intended to be a one time event and I hope that the participants who were from diverse backgrounds socially, economically, racially and culturally, will organize themselves to create even stronger presences in their communities.

Michael Dessen has already started a web-site at the following address <http://www.improvisingacrossborders.webprovider.com> in the hope of fostering the creation of a global improvisers network. We invite those who attended, those reading this article, and any other enthusiasts, to visit the site and join this list-serve.

For me, helping people become aware of the embodiment of their own creative spirit articulated through music, among other things, is important for the survival of healthy people. I also believe that creating bodies of literature to include critical, analytical and experiential writings about improvisation will assist audiences in understanding the interactive nature, complexity and necessity of improvisation in their lives and communities.

Although one can not overlook the political, racial, and cultural barriers that have acted to silence improvising communities, perhaps it has been a certain unwillingness on the part of practitioners themselves to speak up and out for improvised music traditions that have placed these musics at the margins of twentieth century music and music education. Fortunately, community organizations such as the AACM, the Bay Area Improvising Musicians and other improvising networks; the diverse music calendars from cities like Chicago, Seattle, Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, New York, and Boston as well as academic institutions that include improvisation in their curriculums such as: the University of California, San Diego, Bard College, Mills College, Wesleyan, and York University, are together changing and challenging old paradigms and myths about improvisation.



Reflections on UCSD Conference, April 9-11, 1999

Improvising Across Borders

By Beth Glick-Rieman, a writer

When I decided to attend this conference on improvisation, I thought it was to enter with my son into his "musician's world" which has always intrigued and fascinated me. In the opening session of the conference, however, I quickly learned that it is also MY world as a writer, an author, the one who "makes her own space and creates her own future."

The musician uses sounds and silence as the tools to create moods and images. The writer uses words. Both know that creation cannot happen unless the creator is fully present in the moment. As LaDonna Smith, one of the presenters at the conference, put it so aptly, "Improvisation is becoming rich in the magic of the moment."

The presenters during the conference kept my interest and stimulated my thinking in dozens of ways. I can't name them all, but here are a few of the statements that apply as fully to my world as a writer as to my son's world as a musician:

"Intent is important; you'll do more improvising if you intend to do it." J.D. Parran

"Improvisation is transcendental; the aim is to go beyond yourself." Eddie Prevost

"Improvisational music did not just crop up; it is evolutionary; blacks have been doing this for 400 years. Improvisation is a way of galvanizing diverse communities. It involves every aspect of being a human being." Douglas Ewart

"Improvisation is a social necessity, a way of life, a means of survival, as it combines two codes: the dominant culture and one's own marginalized experience." Bennetta Jules-Rosette

"Improvisation is the persona of the traveler, the spectacle of the encounter." Thomas Allen-Harris

"It is the enactment of the human context. The artist is someone who does the best he/she can." David Antin

"Improvisation is a means of constructing material; it develops a structure of its own." Catherine Sullivan

There is not one of these statements that does not also apply to me as a writer. This conference was a "shot in the arm," "a breath of fresh air." Best of all, interaction with all these free and creative spirits inspired me to write my next book in-between times at the piano experimenting with the tools of sounds and silence.

Is there life after work?

by Michael Jackson 2004

Michael Jackson is an independent improvising guitarist living in Sparks, Nevada.

After 13 years of working long hours at hard labor, I find myself with various feelings on the subject.

The workplace is most destructive to creativity and learning for an individual. The reason for the word "individual" is that work asks how do you plan to improve yourself this year, they mean this in a "corporate" way; ie. how do YOU plan on giving/putting out more of your energy/resources/time for the company. This is called (sic) "bettering yourself"(???). They equate learning with taking on more responsibility at the job, risking one's well-being, marriage, and personal goals. Perhaps this is due to the evidence that most people are consumed by night-time TV watching. It seems by people I meet that work drains them so much that it feels good to vegetate. For out of those 13 years I've worked, 8 years were 70-80 hours a week delivering office supplies and doing furniture deliveries. This took a toll on my health, where I spent the whole weekend sleeping cause I was so exhausted. This took a toll on my marriage cause I was never home. I missed out on the first 8 years of my kids growing up. The warehouse crew started doing speed to keep up with the demands for my performance.

Companies do not live on *common sense* but on charts & plans. Lately, the trend in my company has been to *force* more out of the people who have been there the longest, or to get rid of them. I've just seen a manager with 17 years of experience lose their job, because the company deemed the position was no longer needed. He did nothing wrong. He was an exceptional employee putting out above the needed work. The question in my mind is, "Am I next"? because I am now the longest there.

The problem is that, as little children, we were told we have a right to be who we are and to express ourselves creatively. The posters are on many walls of food stamp & social worker's offices. The sad truth is that is NOT a reality. As the child goes to jr. high and high school, popularity contests and cliches make the scene. You enter the job force based on your value and worth to the company, not your worth as a human being. You are told you need to improve yourself so you make a better employee, by taking classes and programs that will raise your value for the company. You don't have to be a rockband to be a marketable product. *You are their product from their training!* When a company goes for new business, they also have to "*sell*" the customer that their employees can handle the workload, whether this is true or not.

The problem is that personal growth is ignored, and this growth is *true* growth. I've learned to operate TV studio cameras and do my own editing. If the company saw that I put a lot of improvised music on TV, it would be most negative. I have learned to repair computers on my own, but the company would discourage employees from using skills without *proper* training. I have studied the physics of haircoloring, but I know *that* would be ignored, because these things have no *market value*

to the company. The company only wants us to invest our time in activities that benefit the company. This way, if a company has to downsize its employees, it can have less employees doing more work and save money. *"Don't ask what the company can do for you; Rather, ask what you can do for the company(sic)."*

This is just a job; This is NOT my life!

With all the complaints & anger about the music industry, we have come full circle to nowhere. We talk about how free improvisation is for *the moment*, yet we rehash out the same subjects over and over. I basically hang on to those that are best written as a good piece on the subject, and then go on. There's a lot of musicians struggling, and we improvisors are part of that lot. Perhaps we should be working on surviving instead of complaining. We don't quit complaining, but we concentrate on preserving our tradition. A lot of us are growing old. What will we leave the next generation? Will there be a next generation or will it be deteriorate? How many improvisors we've known, or heard of, will have disappeared from the scene? How do we carry on our tradition of *just playing*? Unless we preserve the music that we've recorded in the past, our legacy will be lost. How do we preserve our art while working a job that takes that time away? And as the economy goes sour, how do we endure?

I think we need to work on survival skills that can be passed to present and future improvisors, instead of plugging our next cassette or CD. Perhaps, we are all too busy competing for attention. We have to admit we are all after money, too! Who wouldn't rather make a living from one's art than work a job? But, it is sad that we share the same *value* as the world does. I'm surprised that some of us don't put a picture of a naked girl on our CD's just to sell it. Hey, it works! Use the right imagery and gimmicks and you can sell anything. It won't be anything of lasting quality, nor influence others, but it can sell!

So where am I going with all this? I don't know. Perhaps I'm looking for answers to a value system that has all the advantages. We can't conquer it, so we have to work within it. Why are so many independent labels now owned by major ones? We thought we had the record industry on the run when all the indies labels came out, except for the ones that promote music that doesn't bring in the money, like *improvisation*. Get used to being ignored. For them, you and your art have no value, not even your self-worth.

But you are a creative human being, and you do have *value*! Yes, with great worth to others, *by sharing more* than your latest CD! *Your survival skills*, how you play and interact with others, and how you work a job while pursuing your art, *needs to be shared* with others. Without discussion, we are isolated one from another. We need to provoke one another to good works. We need to adapt a new value system that has common-sense, but one with business-sense in dealing with the world. Unless we provide the tools for the next generation while preserving our legacy, we will leave the future much poorer.

I am not entertainment with the same value as a video game.

I am not a marketable product valued like a piece of merchandise.

I am not a faceless number or valued only by my corporate "worth."

I am a statement beyond an incompetant system that produces insignificant results.

I AM.

To send your response to this article, or enter this discussion, email:

the improvisor

LSimprov@mindspring.com

Vancouver Time Flies

Article and Photography

By [Laurence Svirchev](#)

2004

[/pictures are missing in this article, sorry/](#)

The concept of the 11th Annual Vancouver "Time Flies" was simple and intriguing: take eleven improvising musicians from diverse countries, let them arrange themselves in the performance arena, allow them play over four consecutive nights, and finally, listen to what shakes out in the music-making.

But as with all simple concepts, the execution of the idea is complex. There were musicians who had played together before, and some who knew others only by reputation. Joe Williamson, a Canadian now living in Amsterdam, was well-known to Vancouver's Dylan van der Schyff and Ron Samworth. Lori Freedman had played with both van der Schyff and Samworth. Sicilian Gianni Gebbia and Italians Lauro Rossi and Carlos Actis Dato have shared stages. Joe McPhee and Michael Bisio were coming off several weeks together on the road and a studio recording. Eyvind Kang was known through his recordings and Luc Houtkamp has been improvising since 1972.

As Ron Samworth said, "I knew the music of most of the players, but knowing their music does not automatically mean I know how to interact with them." For Samworth, the interaction was not only musical but organizational. Ken Pickering, the Artistic Director of the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society had asked Samworth to oversee the organization of the groupings that would end up on stage.

According to Samworth, "There was resistance even to the idea of pre-determined groupings of musicians. Some musicians said, 'Let's just play.'" On that first night's music, Samworth's opinion held sway. He helped define small groupings so musicians could get to know each other. The evening would end with all eleven improvising as a group.

The two oldest musicians began the series with the youngest. Joe McPhee on tenor saxophone and Michael Bisio on bass joined Dylan van der Schyff on drums for an extended improvisation. It was successful because each individual in this trio is an expert listener, adept at making the music-making process shine. Less successful was the second trio. Lori Freedman seemed intent on letting the audience know how hard she was working. Her on-stage demeanor was one of contorted facial gestures and jerking body movements, as if excessive physicality was required to wrench sound from the bass clarinet. In contrast, Eyvind Kang on violin seemed relaxed to the point where he cared naught for the music. It is not wise for a reviewer to extrapolate too much from the stage appearance of a working performer, so perhaps this lacklustre number should be written off to simple nervousness.

And then came magic: a duet between. Ron Samworth on electric guitar and Joe McPhee on soprano saxophone. Samworth began playing very low on the fret-board. The left middle, ring and pinkie fingers are plucking and the index finger is tapping; in his right hand, metal bar is being rubbed on the strings. Then he plays arco. McPhee is playing to another place, very fast individual notes that evolve into a circular-breath mantra. As Samworth taps, foot-pedals delays, and arcos, they begin to wander into each other harmonically yet each maintains his solitude.

Joe McPhee then begins to weave the horn through the air, from left to right, back and forth. An extraordinary thing happens. The action of his sound and motion creates a huge pulsing wave form, the expansion and contraction of which modifies configuration of the room. The walls begin to change shape, physically moving in and out in as the two shamans modify the human-viewed cosmos. The space has become a macro-realization of the Heisenberg theory. We are in space, we are in time, but neither can be precisely defined simultaneously. We are in the Floating Musical World. And then the aural-physical

effect disappears as McPhee and Samworth hush the sound both on the same tone.

They smile at each other and decide to stay for another composition to end the first set. Once again McPhee plays a mantra. This time Samworth tempers the guitar with alligator clips and tiny bells on the strings. The instrument is now played exotically and is no longer tuned in western mode. There are prayer wheels in the wind as he transport the audience to... Tibet! Meanwhile, McPhee is constructing a pretty melody with a flute-like sound on soprano sax that segues into a melancholic darkness. Again the disparate voices meld together and they end on a breath, a smile, and then a handshake of mutual respect.

With McPhee and Samworth setting a standard of sophistication came a second set of concentrated music. Particularly effective was a trio of McPhee on soprano and Carlo Actis Dato and Lori Freedman each on bass clarinet. Although Freedman had an extension on the horn allowing her to play an octave lower than Dato, she chose to extend the upper-most register of the instrument for this piece. Dato stayed in the nominal range his horn did McPhee.

The piece involved arriving at and exploring three-part harmonies that once established disintegrated pending new syntheses. Freedman eventually began to soar even above the soprano saxophone, hitting ear-splitting over-tones. The combination of instruments was coherent, concise, and improvisory. The three made music as if they had been long-time partners, not people playing together for the first time this night.

With the constant revolving of personnel through both spontaneous and pre-conceived composition over the four nights, musical personalities emerged. Carlo Actis Dato consistently showed himself to be a complete extrovert; he frequently preferred blowing baritone sax as a rhythm instrument. The single trombonist among the eleven (McPhee did not play trombone in this series) spent a lot of time insensitively cutting other players' solos. Bassists Michael Bisio and Joe Williamson and drummer Dylan van der Schyff were uniformly spot-on, their sole apparent intent being to make integral music.

The surprise discovery for Vancouver audiences was Gianni Gebbia. An alto saxophonist, he plays with finesse, integrity, and authority that virtually commands the audience to listen with rapt attention. He was not heard wasting a note. His multi-phonetic control of the instrument was such that he played like a pianist, the bottom end for rhythmic lines while simultaneously playing melodic lines off the top of the horn. He is routinely transcends the mechanics of circular breathing and uses the technique to make valid extended musical statements.

Joe McPhee showed himself to be a most avid listener. He unerringly knew when to contribute to the group effort, when to remain aloof and lay out, and when to intenerate some self-indulgent direction with a new wind on one of his many instruments (legend has it that he once spontaneously soloed simultaneously on soprano sax and trumpet). McPhee summed up his feelings about the improvisational process when he said in interview, "We're trying to play what we don't

know. We have to trust the other musicians, walking naked on a razor blade trying to get from point A to point B.

McPhee's eloquence resounded far more simply on the third night when he said at the end of a piece, "This series is about improvised music, but let us not forget the musicians who made this all possible. One of those musicians is Ornette Coleman. Michael Bisio and I just played his composition, 'Lonely Woman.'"

The high point for large ensemble came on the final number of the third night. It began with Samworth and tenor saxophonist Luc Houtkamp setting a quiet mood. Samworth throughout the series has been asserting himself through musicianship without exercising the device of volume. But on this occasion he begins, for the first time, to make some loud electronic noise. The trombonist, insensitive to the space Samworth wished now to command, wrecked the mood with several loud blats that were no more welcome than a sudden bout of flatulence.

The number was saved when Carlos Actis Dato, baritone in hand, set up a groove. van der Schyff drops his sticks, picks up brushes, and feels his way into a Papa Jo Jones swing thing. At which point Lori Freedman switched to clarinet, rose above the colors of the

lower register instruments and, no kidding, charged into an New Orleans turn-of-the century original jazz feel. She plays as free as starling skittering through spring. Whereupon Luc Houtkamp and Joe McPhee, each on tenor, head into Kansas City swing riffs urging Freedman on. So now we have an identifiable mélange of historical styles, every decade of modern improvisation accounted for, as musicians and audience rocket their way into a tribal chant, all colors swirling stellar chaos.

In speaking to musicians and audience members who were able to attend multiple nights, the overall process was highly satisfactory. Yet there was a sneaking suspicion that all was not well on the last night. Some musicians, for example, were getting a bit tired of devices that had produced a belly-laugh the first time but when repeated were interpreted as a lack of imagination. Dylan van der Schyff expressed himself this way, "By the fourth day, we were getting a bit cranky."

And there were structural difficulties. Ron Samworth points out, "When you have eleven musicians [without a repertoire], groupings can be restrictive. You might have to wait an hour to play. This can actually be counterproductive to the maximum range of texture a musician might be seeking when he can play a full set. You know, on the fourth night, the musicians actually rejected the groupings. The process had actually broken down. When they did that I said, 'Finally, you guys rebelled!'"

Dylan van der Schyff summed up his experience saying, "With this kind of music, there really is no comfort zone. You have to find your way to a purer form. You really can't fall back on your old tricks because that might compromise another musician. It was great to find some players I could be on the same wave-length with, to feel that we could establish a long-term relationship.

"With relationships like that, you can develop a mood, a shape, or a color, and then manipulate the relationship to take it somewhere else. When I have trust like that, I can start upping the ante."

Samworth said something similar as his succinct comment on the four nights, "The ultimate advantage of the Time Flies series was that people from different experiences, styles, and cultures got to play together."

.MP3 - "Evolution, devolution or Revolution"? *by Rotcod Zzaj*

2004

As many in the improvising world know, your friendly author has been "hooked up" since long before the Internet was the "in thing" to be doing (mid-to-late '80's, in fact). My ability to collaborate with so many folks around the world in the early 1990's was *surely* enhanced by my access to electronic mail, faster WWW connections (than many average bears had) & some of the best teachers (tech-gurus) an underground musician could ever have. From the time the WWW began evolving into something I could visualize the mechanics of, I've thought that there must be a (non-intrusive, non-spamming) way to USE it to the advantage of those who produce music outside the pale... a means to get the WORD out to those who haven't heard (yet) that there are alternatives to commercial music! The challenge, of course, would be to have it be something a musician could "use", without having to learn whole volumes of new technology.

With that thought in mind, let's examine the three phases I (personally) went through in learning how to use these tools:

Evolution: Clearly, those of us who had access to WWW technology in the early stages were amazed by the potentials it seemed to have. Fast (at that time, our highest speeds were 14,400 baud per second (bps)) transfers were possible, so we could put pages up on the web in a matter of (only) minutes, instead of the *hours* it required at the original speeds of 300bps. As speeds improved for dialup connections (28.8bps, then 33.6 & finally 56.6bps), we began to realize that we had enough bandwidth available to put up pictures of the people who were making these sounds, album covers and all kinds of other *visual* attractions. At that time (1990-1994), few of us believed that the tools AND the speeds would advance to the levels they have today... some Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) services offer you relatively cheap connections at 128,800bps, others (slightly more expensive) can boost you to 768,000bps (on a regular old telephone line, believe it or not)! In addition to the fantastic increase in speed of file transfer, other developments (in particulate, audio and video streaming as well as advances in database technologies) from those more in to the development side of the tools have made it ever more easy for a musician to make their presence (and their music) accessible to thousands more folks that might have otherwise never

heard them. The evolution we speak of has brought the technology to a level where ANY musician can learn them well enough to use them without becoming too "geeky".

Devolution: What began to happen (for me, as well as several other musicians I know who were "in" to the the technology) was a tendency to rely on the tools of technology as the *trade!* The WWW, with it's streaming audio and video, newsgroups & other communications tools, was being viewed (by some many musicians) as the *message*, rather than the *vehicle!* There were many discussions (that I remember) where we were talking ONLY about the tools... to the degree that almost no MUSIC was being accomplished. When an improviser (or any musician, for that matter) becomes so focussed on knob-twisting, it's nigh impossible to *create* any MUSIC! Now, don't read any intent on my part to discourage use & expansion of knowledge about th' TOOLS - just go about it with the realization that it's a natural phase; musicians (& particularly those who improvise) can't escape a certain degree of excitement about the capabilities of some new gadget, electronic or otherwise (remember yer' first 4-trak?). The real danger (& some have encountered it already) is that an all digital world can make it (much) easier to *retreat...* to form our own worlds... to *escape* contact with others of like mind/inclination. That danger is even further *amplified* by the fact that the tools have advanced to the point where those choosing this kind of isolation can actually *get away with it!* This is a fine-line to tread for those of us who improvise, too... it's very easy to see the isolation as a way to create more & better visions... in fact, if you stop and think about it, the improviser has always done this (to some degree, anyway). The only way to escape the boundaries is to go OUTSIDE of them, whether individually or in concert with others who share this compulsion to do things differently. The thing to remember, in the context of a digitized world, is that in order to go *forward*, we must (even if only occasionally) get OUT... SEE, TASTE & FEEL the realities around us - that's where the spark of inventiveness is BORN! The friction between "normal" and "outside" is what causes the creativity in the first place! As long as that's remembered, the alchemy will continue to *evolve*, rather than *devolve*.

Revolution: We truly ARE on the verge of genuinely NEW ways of doing things... (some) musicians are already experimenting with online collaborations; others are combining the audio and video capabilities of the WWW to create (nearly) interactive tools to communicate with their audience. It's (quite) possible that in a very short span, speeds will have increased to the point where live music concerts (improvised or naught) will occur on a daily basis (performing from your living rooms, of course). That idea is really EXCITING to me... what better way for an audience to get to know the performers than a quick online chat session right after such a performance? .MP3 (or whatever the current format happens to be)

will force commercial interests to *accommodate* new genres & formats that the PEOPLE demand (it already has, to some degree). Instant gratification (not in a negative sense) will become recognized as the positive force for change that it SHOULD be! In some wild moments, I imagine that *improvisation* will be seen as a totally *natural* way to live... that all *form* will be decried as *weird*. Am I dreaming? You BET... for it's dreaming that causes the tumult we need to turn the *normals* to living/breathing beings that deplore cruelty... inhumanity... and the insanity that we see around us.

Hopefully these meager words will inspire folks in the various musical communities around the world to THINK about what stage(s) they've been through & contribute their ideas about how it could (& should) change in the new world(s) we are moving in to. Feel free to contact the author via his (main) WWW site, at <http://www.olywa.net/rotcod/CDS.htm> or via e-mail to rotcod@olywa.net

.MP3

.mp3 How Do I Get there from
Here? .mp3,,,[,mp3?/?

by Rotcod Zzaj

2004

You wanna get your sounds up on the web?

We discussed (a bit) about my philosophy (like I always do) on .MP3 and WWW sound files in the last article... what I think I need to do next is explain (just) a few of the tools you'll need to be successful at getting your sounds up on the web!

Step #1

First, you'll HAVE to pick a site (or three) to be used to store your files. There are a LOT of them out there right now, & I'm pasting a list in (originally furnished by Bryan Baker, of GAJOOB 'zine & HOMEMADEMUSIC.com) below... the list has a few comments from Bryan, but don't take HIS word for it... go and VISIT the site(s) first, read through the fine print, then test a

few downloads yourself. **Anyway, here's Bryan's list:**

IUMA.COM is the granddaddy of music sites. they used to charge a lot of

money for artist Pages, but now they've been bought by e-music who also owns **tunes.com**, **rollingstone.com** and others. it's all free. you're limited to 10 songs. they don't sell music yet. they pay you 25% of ad revenue generated from hits to your artist page every quarter. they're just starting that so no one's sure how it's going to work. the site is very slick.

AUDIOGALAXY.COM hosts mp3 files with a 25MB limit. They are announcing a "new" audiogalaxy soon. They don't sell music currently. MP3.COM hosts mp3 files. you can now put html on your page which allows for more customization. they will create DAM CD's which are culled from tracks you select and burned to a CD to order with your artwork. They're cut is 50% of your selling price.

RIFFAGE.COM is quickly becoming a favorite mp3 site. they've just signed a co-branding deal with AOL which should push them even further. They will sell merchandise, including T-shirts, you send to them and keep 15%.

GARAGEBAND.COM just gave away a \$250,000 recording contract and is now promoting their second one. It's founded by Jerry Harrison (Talking Heads) and as Sir George Martin on its board. They don't sell stuff. You have to review 10 songs for every song you upload. They award the recording contracts based on reviews. very slick interface.

AMP3.COM is very inconsistent. they pay you 5 cents for every download, but then stick a 5 second ad on the front of your mp3 file.

Here are some others I'm less familiar with, but have posted information in past DiY Reports:

NETUBE.COM is a little corner of the web to discover artists and bands by offering music downloads in mp3 format in a creative way. The goal herefrom the start was to provide a vehicle of exposure for the indie artist, signed or unsigned, required being simply a permission email from the unsigned artist or artist/ bands label. **E-mail:** **netube@altavista.net**.

Web Address: **<http://www.netube.com>**.

QUICKMP3.COM is in need of finished product of all genres for downloading. I know

that there a host of other mp3 sites out there already, however, most if not all, are giving the downloads away for free. We will be selling the downloads and you will be paid \$.50 for each download. We will be using a single format so you can send material for as many different genres as you wish. There is a fee of \$30.00. For this \$30.00 you may submit up to 12 songs(on one CD-R please) and we will upload them to our site and away you go. If interested, send me an e-mail. Contact: James. **E-mail:** ocm87@aol.com
Web Address: <http://www.quickmp3.com>

MP3VAULT.COM -- Why join mp3vault.com?

FREE Artist or Band Web Pages. Free, is free, need we say more. Your MP3's Stay Commercial Free. Your fans get your music without commercials attached to them. From the initial concept of mp3vault.com we want to make it easy for users to find your music. Things like our unique similar artist search, location search and our searchable gig calendar. FREE One Click Search Engine Submission. We not only give you web space, we want your web pages at mp3vault.com to be seen and your music heard. We have built a search engine submission tool right in to our site that let you add your mp3vault pages to the top major search engines like Excite, Infoseek, Altavista, HotBot and more. Gig Calendar Listings. Add any live dates you have lined up to your mp3vault gig calendar. Users can find out about your live performances by searching our online gig calendars. Users can search by city, state and or date. No Storage Limits. We put no limits on how many MP3's you add to your portfolio. No Hassle Streaming Audio. mp3vault.com will create streaming samples of any mp3 you post for you. Real Time Statistics and Standings.

mp3vault.com provides real time, to the minute stats on all your mp3 downloads, QuickPlays listened to, your current standings and your web page visits. And We're Just Getting Started!!! Web Address: **<http://www.mp3vault.com>**.

WEEKLYINDIEMP3.COM is a new site with weekly indie MP3's. "No Crap, just good indie bands." Web Address: **<http://www.weeklyindiemp3.freesevers.com>**

Announcing **AUDIOSURGE.COM** -- "My friends and I love music, especially independent music. We felt that their were tons of great bands out there who weren't receiving the recognition they deserved, mainly because they weren't signed to major labels. The Internet and the popularity of MP3s have started to level out the playing field between the major and independent artist. We wanted to be part of that revolution. So we started a free service for independent artists, labels, promoters, and general music fans called audioSurge. Do you love music? Then you should check out some of the free MP3s we offer on audioSurge.com. We might not have "Crash" by The Dave Matthews Band or "Ruff Riders" by DMX, but we certainly have a lot of tracks by talented musicians. For instance if you like Matchbox 20 or The Counting Crows you might want to check out "Lay You Down" by Tremorphlo.

Are you in a band? Sign up with audioSurge.com and we will give you a free generated webpage. Link to your existing home page and get more hits! Upload a picture and an MP3! We also offer free promotional services such as website submission to 12 popular search engines and music indexes. Do you run a record label? Extend your presence on the web by adding your roster to our band list. We have many exciting features planned for audioSurge.

Soon to launch is

<http://www.buymp3.com/>, a one-stop-shop to purchasing MP3s on the Internet. **E-mail:** briang@audiosurge.com.

Web Address: <http://www.audiosurge.com>

KWEEVAK'S TRACKS is a MP3 and music promotion site. We offer links to MP3's by many famous Classic rock artists and this feature is drawing in many rock n roll enthusiasts who then find out about the new music we are promoting. The artists we have represented on our site have reported that our site has provided more international sales and interest than received from the larger new music directories. This is because we feature only a handful of artists at a time and promote them to our large, international audience. Contact: Richard J. Lynch. Phone: (973) 962-4710. E-mail:

mr_kweevak@yahoo.com.

Web Address: <http://www.kweevak.com>

MP3DOM.COM I am a New York City based music attorney/manager and former record producer (Blues Traveler, Spin Doctors, LL Cool J, etc ...). Along with a number of other top music industry professionals, I am about to launch the most exciting new music download site on the Internet. It will be the first site to filter every artist submission so that all of our music will be good. In fact, our slogan is "New Music That Doesn't Suck." And, of course, it will be free for artists and visitors. MP3dom.com truly represents a breakthrough way for talented artists to promote their music to the general listening public and the music business community over the Web. All material submitted to us will be reviewed in-house; first by me and other industry pros and then by major label and major publisher A&R people on our Creative Advisory Panel. Only about 1 in 25 artists will actually receive a page on the site. This means that being accepted on the site has real value as a vindication of an artists talent and as a promotional tool. We expect no more than 1200 artists across all genres to be added during the first year. The other exciting aspect of the site is that every registered user's visit will be personalized. Once a user registers, they receive their own personal information page. This page will contain a list of new songs they may like based on their previous downloads, and a list of artists from their home state or country. In addition, the artist can constantly update their list of

upcoming gigs on their artist page. If they are playing in a registered user's home state or country within thirty days after that user logs in, their gig will show up on their personal page. If accepted to the site, an artist will receive an extremely well laid out artist page, and the ability to add a new song every two months. See, we keep the number of artists and songs low so that artists have the best chance of reaching a wide audience. You won't find multiple songs by the same artists on our charts. The launch will occur sometime in September. We will have a booth at the CMJ Conference. If you are going to be there, please make sure to stop by. Contact: Josh Futterman.

Phone: (212) 662-2052.

Postal Address: **MP3DOM.com** ,
3143 Broadway, Suite 3D , New York, N.Y. 10027.

E-mail: info@mp3dom.com.

Web Address: <http://www.mp3dom.com>

HOMETOWN SOUNDS is a new mp3 site for your songs. Band pages have biographies, mp3's, contact information for ordering music. Web Address: <http://www.hometownsounds.com>

MIRRORMUSIC.COM invites the independent/unsigned musicians among you to upload MP3s of your original music. "The site is still quite new, and we look forward to lots of participation from the best independent musicians out there. We are committed to helping your music find the audience it deserves, and helping you find the resources you need. The basic premise of the site is this: artists upload MP3s to the site. Listeners come to the site to listen to music, rate individual tracks, and receive recommendations for further listening based on their ratings and other people's ratings. The recommendations are generated by an intelligent correlation algorithm we have created. This means that your music will reach the ears of people who are most likely to enjoy it. You will have a page on the site on which you can keep track of your music, including how many times it has been downloaded and listeners' average ratings for each selection. We also link to your outside home page (if you have one) so you can expect more interested listeners to visit your site. If you don't have any tracks for uploading we also invite you to register as a listener on our site, so that you can find great tracks by other independent artists. So far, all uploads and downloads are free on MirrorMusic.com. We are investigating ways of letting you designate certain songs for free download, and certain songs for sale. We will make sure that the mechanisms we set up are beneficial to the artists and reasonable for the listener.

Web Address: <http://www.mirrormusic.com>

MPTROIS.COM is a French mp3 site. Web Address: <http://www.mptrois.com>

LYCOS LISTENING ROOM is a new site offered by Lycos designed to guarantee your music is heard. Lycos Listening Room utilizes Fast Search & Transfer's advanced searching technology, so your future fans can easily find your music. By identifying yourself with music genres and other artists who have influenced your sound, new listeners can easily locate the type of music they want to hear - your music. Of course, fans familiar with your name will have instant access to your music. By uploading your music right now, your music will be the first heard on the Lycos Listening Room site due to launch November 1st. Please be advised the following URL to which you'll have access is a pre-launch beta site. This beta site has been designed to receive your music and artist information before we go live on November 1st. Lycos Listening Room will provide all the elements you need to reach new fans and retain the current ones. All you need to do is provide your music in MP3 format and some biographical information - we'll walk you through the process. We look forward to working with you and assisting your future success in the music industry. E-mail: mp3upload@lycos.com. Web Address: <http://209.67.247.171/logon>

FRANCEMP3.COM is the leading MP3 files distributor in France with over 150.000 visits per month, 130 artists and 300 songs currently on line ; we offer you a FREE opportunity to join us ; you will have the benefit of presenting as many songs as you want... on your own web page, and your own e-mail, your download and streaming statistics, a clear presentation of your band. Francemp3.com is the first Net Company to have signed a distribution agreement with SACEM, the French authority who controls Authors, Composers and Publishers copyrights, to whom we pay a fee for free downloaded music. Whether you are French or non-French this means that if you are member of your domestic Copyright Agency, you will be paid by SACEM, even though your files are downloaded for free. Francemp3.com is the only French MP3 company to have rented a booth for the MIDEM 2000, the international music market in January next year. If you wish so, we will be more than happy to help you find an editor or a producer for starting a great music career. Web Address: <http://www.francemp3.com>

STEP # 2

The next step is to convert (some of) your tunes into .mp3 (and/or .ra)

format. To some, this sounds like a complicated process, but once you've done it, it's really easy to do (though it DOES take a pretty fair chunk of your time).

Here's the way I do it (& the (basic) tools I use (this is NOT "the way", it's just the way Zzaj does it):

A. Record your files from (from CD, analog tape, whatever) to .wav format.

The tool I use for this is "**Cool Edit**". It's downloadable from the net at

this site: <http://www.syntrillium.com/load.htm>

The version I got requires \$50 to unlock it so it can do all functions at one time, but the "free" version still works just fine. The download page shown above features newer versions that will allow you to convert DIRECTLY to .MP3 format, & they certainly bear investigation (though I imagine they will be pretty costly).

B. If you use the "free" version of "**Cool Edit**", you will then need to

convert the .wav files to .mp3 format. I use **WINAMP ENCODER...** information about it & download sites can be found at <http://software.mp3.com/software>

Don't forget, you'll need the **PLAYER software**, too. Just download the

programs to your computer, expand them (by double-clicking on them) and then begin using them.

C. Once you've got them all converted, go to the .MP3 site you've selected as "home" for your toonz & begin the (somewhat) time-consuming process of uploading your files. If you're lucky enough to have a fast Internet connection, it will take much less time, but it's still a lot of work...

...deciding what you're going to release (remember, once you put it up there, it's pretty much "in the public domain")...

....deciding what to type in your artist BIO... responding to e-mails, etc., about your tunes, or where to purchase your CD's.

Over the next few weeks/months, we will furnish more in-depth discussion of

each of these steps. In the meantime,
don't hesitate to send your questions to
author rotcod@olywa.net

Also, to look & listen to the results of his work, go to
<http://www.olywa.net/rotcod/CDS.htm>

Rotcod Zzaj, aka Dick Metcalf
Perpetrator & Instigator,
Zzaj Productions
5308 65th Ave SE
Lacey, WA 98513
<http://www.olywa.net/rotcod>
rotcod@olywa.net

Thoughts and Comments - by KID LUCKY

2004

Improvised music is the root of all creation. Big words but for those who have not reached that level but improvise, you will. I have seen past, present and future while under the influence of a heavy groove. Which is why I feel that improvised music is more than just entertainment. Improvised music has healing purposes and teaches us many things or makes us more aware to the (((vibes))) that are around us. Jazz is a very good example of improvised music being an open healing force and than becoming a "controlled substance." Improvised Music was the root of it all in classical music. But after Beethoven created the the whole writing thing, because he was going deaf, it seems like it became a forgotten art in classical music as well. We won't even go to the heart of Black American music. So many Duke Ellingtons Before Duke Ellington and during, it is boggling. But we are told that if we cannot read it, and if you can't write it, then it is not music. Sun Ra is so powerful that when I was sick "Space Is The Place" cured me.

Improvised music is credited to being the beginning CREATIVITY... Well According to Christians and other religions, their Gods CREATED heaven and earth. And there you have it - improv is the root of all creation. I do feel that improvised musicians should work harder at connecting with each other around the U.S. and beyond. And that the Only way to do it Is to gather funds to create a larger record label that has the Prince deal: leave the creating up to the artist and the business of promotion and other label administrative stuff to the label. Or to start up a large space similar to the Lincoln Jazz Center. Just size, not music. I mprov musicians must bang down NARAS's door so that we can get the credit that we deserve; for being able to create on the spot. Do you really think that Wynton Marsalis can play jazz like Cecil Taylor? Heck no! Cecil can create for hours take a break and then play again! Wynton Marsalis can't even go through the first round! Also, improvised music holds the key to unity amongst the masses.

In improvised music, listening is more important than playing. Now if you apply that to many different relationships you would find that arguments, wars and other difficulties would drop dramatically if people were more sensitive to each other. To be able to work with sound is similar to working with people. Improvised music is alive and must be treated with respect and dignity.

-kid lucky-

Kid Lucky projects!

Urban Acappella is a magnificent vocal concept bringing jazz, trip hop and r&b together with three of the most unique vocalists to hit the scene. Featuring Miles Griffith, M and Kid Lucky the young mastermind behind this project; are showing the future of a cappella jazz. What is more amazing is that these amazing pieces of music are all improvised! Improvised music is making a huge comeback in the NYC jazz and music scene and NEW YORK CITY JAM SESSION INC. is on the cutting edge of it. Founded by its president Terry(kid lucky)Lewis, NEW YORK CITY JAM SESSION INC. began in the fall of 1999. NEW YORK CITY JAM SESSION INC. started an improvised jam session at the Sidewalk Cafe located at 94 ave.A (on the corner of East 6 street and ave.A) now currently happening every Wednesday from 11:00pm - 1:00am. It is the place to be on a late wednesday night. some of the musicians that have shown up to play or just check it out are Sabir Matten, Codi Mundi, Luther Thomas, Ed Littman, Danny Zanker, Bruce Mack, On Davis, M, Thierno, Adam Feller, Tom Chess, Tor Snyder and countless others in the Free Music scene

For more info 212-222-3532 or email kid_lucky@hotmail.com

NEW YORK CITY JAM SESSION INC. is at it again with a new spin on the whole slam scene. With all the musicians complaining about other musicians and who is good and who sucks... bring all the gripes to "The Open Improvised Slam Jam Competition!".

What is it?

1. go to the Pink Pony at 7:30pm on Tuesday March 7
2. Sign up. First 25 musicians get on list. So get there early!

3. Competition starts at 8:00pm

4. Each musician gets 3 - 5 min to create an improvised piece with

thier own instrument (a drum kit and guitar amp are also provided)

Each musician is judged by three judges picked out of the audienc before the competiton begins.

5. After 1st round the ten lowest scorers are subtracted and the remaining 15 musicians compete in the 2nd round.

6. After 2nd round is over the next 10 lowest scoring musicians are subtracted. Leaving only 5 musicians to compete for the grand prize of \$25.00

7. 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners of each week will compete at the end of the month for \$50.00

8. Your hosts of the competition will be Dan Walsh, Tor Snyder and Kid Lucky

9 Admission is \$5.00

Pink Pony is located at 176 Ludlow st.

sighn up at 7:30pm showtime 8:00pm

starting Tuesday March 7, 2000

For more info contact Terry at 212-222-3532 or e-mail kid_lucky@hotmail.com

Guelph International Jazz Festival and Colloquium,

Sept 6-10, 2000

~a report on the colloquium~

by LaDonna Smith

In sync with the theme of "crossing borders and intercultural dialogue" this festival and colloquium, the brainchild of Ajay Heble, its Artistic Director, brings together a huge range of practitioners comprised of mainstream, outside jazz, world music, and free improvisational musicians. Alongside that, he simultaneously gathers a meeting of critical scholars within the University system, as well as thinkers, writers, and commenters outside the academy to forge a collective summit on related subjects of jazz history, improvisation, intercultural collaborations, comparisons, and potentialities of music improvisation, jazz poetry, and world music.

Anthony Murphy from McMaster University delivered on the topic, "Improvising Foreign Relations: Jazz, the American State Department, and Intercultural Communication". He talked about the "jazz ambassadors", particularly the experience of Dizzie Gillespie and his achievement of directness between artist and public. The emphasis on direct communication with people of other nations providing a better understanding of the people of the United States ie. "communication between peoples instead of governments". For instance, in 1956, at the height of racial hysteria in the U.S., our government propaganda was to attempt to bring some public relations "balance" to the segregation issue. The government propaganda abroad was aimed towards a favorable image of race relations in the U.S., an attempt to send a positive cultural message. So a multi-racial big band under the direction of a black leader was a more positive image of race-relations than what was actually going on in the U.S. The State Department used "Freedom of Expression", the bed rock of the American message, as a frontier myth, and in fact a public relations scam. Murphy asked the question, "Does jazz continue to be used as a signifier for personal freedom, but in fact acts as a cloak for continued abuses?" Jazz serves the notion of political liberation, but it does not serve gender liberation. Women are exceedingly token and exceedingly positioned. Murphy told some wonderful anecdotes about Dizzy Gillespie his radical social restructuring antics, citing his refusal to play a celebrity role or attitude with stories of Gillespie's refusal to play for the elite,

for his insistence on letting vagrant children into a concert, and even cites an incident when in India, Gillespie actually trades places with the carrier of his rickshaw.

With Jason Stanyek, (UCSD) we encountered the African musical world of pan collaborations, the "common bond", historical and familial, the organic links between cultural and political movements. He spoke of a mode of listening which "directs the gaze of the ear", the historical continuum of collaboration in interethnic activity, hybrid landscapes and heterogeneity. Pointing out the ethnic diversity of the various slave populations, but through co-operative efforts among the slaves, they survived the social oppression. A large discussion of heterogeneous relationship in music followed. A relationship of collaboration that allows differences in ethnicity and style to exist simultaneously, rather than a homogenous whole, citing the "Afro-Cuban Suite" of Dizzie Gillespie and drummer Chano Poso of 1949, where each kept their cultural and stylistic identities, not to efface differences. This, in contrast to the "Graceland" recording of Paul Simon, in which there was an attempt at a "Universalist" collaboration, a universal language seeking to transcend differences. As in the famous quote by Ornette Coleman, "Being in Unity, but not being in Unison". A further example where cultural differences are embraced, not erased, in the aspect of nothing is "cleaned up", citing by contrast, the penny whistle being cleaned up in Paul Simon's work, to play in a tuning more palpable to the western ear.

Marshal Seoules (Malaspina University College, British Columbia) began his talk with a sound clip of Robert Johnson's "Cross-roads", the blues standard. His subject was "Eshu's Cap: Improvisations at the Crossroads of the Diaspora". The reference was to intransients, travellers, meeting at the junction, the crossroads of chance and determinancy. He referenced to Robert Ferris Thompson's book, "The Flash of the Spirit", the "Oshay" message that tests our wisdom and compassion. Eshu's black and white cap was worn in public. Those on the east saw cap to be black, those on the west saw it to be white. Both were present, seeing the cap. The indeterminacy was of presentation and interpretation. The God, Eshu declares that both were right. Eshu opens the commerce between the human and the divine sacrifice, places of openings and possibilities of opportunity at the crossroads, drawing the conclusion that design is never finished. Protocols of improvisation include repetition of the known and revision within the frames and boundaries. Protocols of improvisation seem like a paradox, but in fact there is a need for it, in order to deviate. He refers to the "trickster", and points to the junction in the brain that translates feeling into thinking, the physical crossroads in the limbic system where peptides carry the signals to translate the paradox, and infers that this is the point where improvisation takes place. This crossroads in the brain is the site of improvisation.

After Charley Gerard's presentation highlighting ideas contained in his book, Jazz in Black and White: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Jazz Community, a lively discussion ensued bringing out points that implied that intercultural music making has become reflexive and self-conscious. Globalizing forces have moved to a new level as a cultural influence. There is the universalist attitude that it doesn't matter where you came from; you are making music!

There is the pan collaborations where focus on cultural similarities is important. There is the de-territorialization of music creating a kind of homology as in say, samba or Brazilian musical influences which are absorbed into North American music. This brings up the "de-territorizing" of music when musical forms are uprooted and the question of "authenticity" (a social problem as in white guys playing "black" music).

Also were discussion on the question "what is play?" and meditations on the idea of play. What is going on? How much is theater? How much is performance? How much is autonomic? Most languages have a subjunctive mood. The place of improvisation in the brain could be the place where the indicative and the subjunctive argue/ or "play".

The afternoon session introduced somewhat lighter discourse through its theme **Navigating Cultures: Institutions, Improvisation, Infrastructure**. Lead off by Paul Anderson (Univ. of Michigan) in a lively review of Tavernier's film "Round Midnight" which depicted a jazz musical life based on emotion and circumstance vs. the years of technique it takes to become a musician, to embody and live the art. He points out the director's choices, and the possible popular misrepresentation of the artist's life and lifestyle. Anderson concluding that "the frontier between life and fiction is always thin. Which is the shadow? Which is the act?"

My presentation entitled "What to do at the Fork in the Road: Improvisation as a Model of Social Behaviour and Cultural Navigational Technique" can be found on this site elsewhere in its entirety (<http://www.the-improvisor.com> -go to ARTICLES), so I will refrain on a partial summary here. Needless to say, I pointed towards a spirituality that exists in music improvisation and the recognition of that impetus for expression (see the article).

Finally, David Lee (correspondent for Coda, co-author of Stopping Time: Paul Bley and the Transformation of Jazz) whose topic was "Structure and Infrastructure: Past and Future Theatres of Improvised Music," spoke in a highly personalized and engaging manner of his own experiences in music. With a touch of humor, he brought personal experiential recollections to a lay level of understanding. He pointed out that the lack of commercial appeal steers improvised music into the more "intimate" and smaller venues, thereby creating more integral communities based around the music. Citing a friend dying of cancer, who bought a beautiful painting from another artist, who declared that she would like to die gazing at the painting, speaks of the power of the spirit. The intimacy, the ultimate goal that if the music (or art) can move just one person, and bring to them peace and joy, then that is the whole purpose and meaning of this artistic existence. His point moved me almost to tears, and transformed my being to a state of awe. What is the listener, but a state of consciousness.

On Thursday, the keynote speaker George Elliot Clarke (Univ. of Toronto) cited the work of Frederick Ward in his talk "Writing as Jazz". From his powerfully inspiring talk, I am moved to seek out the work of the black poet from Nova Scotia. Ward, in his words, was one of the

least heard, least performed, least understood, baddest jazz poets of our time. This he contrasted with the notion that the "spoken word movement," with its historical treatment focusing on white poets, that Ward was truly disseminating popular beats with popular words. He cites the sound poets non reliance on syntax, and the overlap of slam, rap, and popular poetry. While white beat and hippie poets are documented, Ward was the true devotee and practitioner of a jazz poetry.

Ward's achievement was according the voice's primacy, of giving the voice flavor, using voices like instruments. Some of the origins and precursors were notably the black church, with its songs, dance, moanings, oratorical prowess, and improvisational voicings. Another aspect of his work reveals jazz relationships of syncopation, signifying, call and response, repetition in lieu of mass fusions of rhythm and text with emphasis on polyphony: multiple tones, multiple rhythms, multiple meanings, merging and melding multi-cultural influences of jazz, blues, and church, bop, and cool. Irregular phrases, on and off beats, avant garde jazz, with its freedom and improvisation on a grand scale, with its completely free handling of multiplicities and even furthermore, more aggressive as multi-cultural, spontaneous changes, masking double entendre, and rhythmic emphasis on what would be a weak beat. Virtuoso free rhyming, blurring the rhyme, scattng, vocalizations becoming extreme verbal rituals, grunts, painterly renderings in words to be delivered or spoken in an outspoken way, deployment of lyrics and vocaleze, "Hey-bop-a-re-bop!"

The poet deploying jazz devices to the poetry, striving to achieve the aesthetic rhythmic complexity of the music, the "open-ended closure" of works written to be improvised, Clarke pointed to Ward's writing and work signifying its genius and its powerful debts to jazz.

From Marc Chenard's (jazz scribe for [Coda](#), [Musicworks](#), [Jazz Podium](#), and [Improjazz](#)) talk "Instinct and Design: the Dialectics of Improvisational Music, we gleaned some appearances and simple principles of the differences of jazz and free improvisation. The tradition of jazz hall-marking a basic theme and variation scheme vs. free improvisation with a different schematic. In Jazz, Chenard related that it starts with a "form", and you improvise a "content". The performance must have a "mastery" of the form. It entails a competence and an instinct to design an overall performance. In free music, there is nothing. The aspect of "performance" really drives the music. The performer shows his experience and competence on the spot. So a content is being developed on instinct as the performer tries to design something, and out comes the form. Again there is a competence involved in performance. So in traditional jazz, form is what you start with, whereas in free music, form is what you end up with. Chenard noted the famous Steve Lacy quote about the difference in composition and improvisation where Lacy says, "In composition, you have all the time you need to write 15 minutes of music. In improvisation, you *only* have 15 minutes to write 15 minutes of music."

Later in discussion, George Lewis asked, "Is there *really* NOTHING before you start improvising?" Chenard, came back with "no". Your history, your training, your baggage is all there. Nobody starts in a total vacuum. George Lewis affirms that the implications are far greater. "You have all the preparedness. You leap off into the void."

Also part of the **Communities in Dialog** panel were Zack Furness (Univ. of Pittsburgh) and Kevin McNeilly (Univ. of British Columbia), the former speaking on "Masada and Musical Zionism" and McNeilly's "Radical Piety: John Zorn, Walter Benjamin, William Meyerowitz." A discussion in which aspects of Jewishness, contexts and references, the relationship of Zorn's packaging, liner notes, and mythologies decoding the music for you, in an attempted expression of Jewish consciousness outside the framework of orthodoxy. Perhaps the aesthetic aims at piety and sanctity, as in the Masada performance representing a kind of Jewish revivalism; but in fact points to Zorn's genius as a punk radical and cultural impresario, bringing out that Zorn's point could be justly, the act of listening, as the scratching, groove noise, contexts and referencing are very important to his work. And the question also arose, "Is the performance a substitute for the religious practice that it represents?"

The Keynote speaker on Friday was George Lewis, (Univ. of California in San Diego) renowned for his pioneering leadership as trombonist, improviser, organizer, and educator. His subject: "The Old People Speak of Sound: Personality, Empathy, Community". George is a dynamic and engaging speaker, who speaks more from his heart and mind, than from his notes. He began his talk with an engaging conversational informality with the statement, "Black music is the mule that pulls the wagon of the whole commoditization of music along."

As the black jazz generation was causing music to become "de-Euro-ized" and more obviously multi-cultural, Lewis pointed out that the modern rise of "sound artists" (ie. Marinetti, Cage, Busollo, etc.) and sonic arts were primarily another classification of music movements in which the white artist was premier, with an exclusion of African-American artists, implying distinctive further nobilities on the white side, and certain fixities of black music. He pointed out wrong framings of music, and certain racialized notions of authenticity and cultural theft and noted that racialization is one of the places that we lose perspective.

Look at the the systems of cultural productions. What is "being stolen" is subjectivity itself-- the cultural system's exercise of power. Individuals can take advantage of it, or not. He confronted the systems that were being cultivated, and exposed the so-called "experimentalist" as being pan-European, and self serving. He challenged us to "grow up" and recognize multi-cultural, multi-ethnic variety of areas in twentieth century experimental music. The messages are introspective. They are ourselves, our possibilities. "What you live really does come out of your horn". Concepts of sound point to deeper levels of meaning. Sound is not timbre.

George proposes the notion that we should be thinking about a "body-based" musical analysis. That music comes out of and is orientated towards the listeners from a bodily

perspective. He made an analogy to an "autism of culture", the inability to perceive other minds, other cultural backgrounds and meanings. That Euro-centric musical training doesn't equip the students to hear anything that is different to their own experience as anything but "noise". To hear only noise is to remain removed from the slave's message.

Aural culture is too slow! We don't have time to listen. We already know the heavily scripted media version. George puns about "canned" music: "canonizations", models of history, safe confinement of historical embodiment, and *change* might actually provoke *alternative realities* (oops!).

"Why express diversity over nurturing?" he asks us. Individuals and collectivity do co-exist. We also reach out for one another. Make an atmosphere in which we all can survive, which we can all have in common. As Charlie Parker is quoted "sound is meaning-rich carriers of community". Not to talk of sound and silence as "durations" which lack relationship. In the Cage's context, sound is distanced from intentionality and empathy. George says to us,

"*Daily lives* offer powerful opportunities for 'sound'. Sounds *do have* meaning. Behind the mind, the sound demonstrates the soul."

He laments and scorns the passive submission of people to sound to "just DO IT to me!" without personal involvement. But he advocates everyone to listen in a dialogical way, to take part in defining and facilitating, establishing *connections* between one person and another. A true awareness of our *Sound* brings an affirmation of identity, and a nurturing of community.

The colloquium, to my mind, as a unique and powerful presence in the Guelph Jazz Festival week sets off an internal community inquiry into the making of music, and the social ramifications of it. It brings to us the artists, up close, and creates an opportunity for people and artists to co-mingle, communicate, and learn from each other. Also the fact that the colloquium is free and open to the public makes it accessible to all, although few community people are either aware of it, or they do not make their presence a particularly dominating part of it.

The workshops which accompanied the colloquium were also free, but to me, avoided for the most part the potential which they could serve as a true "workshop" which would function as a springboard for more dialog and interaction between the public and the artists. Too frequently, the workshops were just large co-minglings of musicians. More experienced artists collaborated/improvised quite well, creating a dynamic concert of sorts, while less experienced artists politely and cautiously contributed very little of their true potential. More structure, in that case, could have produced more beneficial results in combining musicians of homogeneous instrumentations, or disparate musical aesthetics, as in the case with the **Global Strings** workshop, which unfortunately gave each artist very little space in which to explore their potential, either individually or collectively. By contrast, good intention and positive leadership was demonstrated by Jesse Stewart in the **New Communities of**

Sound : Expanded Musical Resources workshop, but the sad part was that there were too many participants for the time allotment, and the free improvisation that followed resulted in the last three participants rushing through a sketchy presentation of their expanded musical resources, as well the collective improvisation was a shallow and pointless duration of soundings, rather than a substantial free improvisation that would stand as art. Also, the **Jazz Cooperatives, Jazz Communities: the AACM and the ICP**, brilliant as it was a performance, with George Lewis, Joseph Jarman, Leroy Jenkins meeting Misha Mengelberg, Han Bennink, and Michael Moore, could have been more appropriately termed a "Musical Meeting" rather than a workshop. I found this to be true also, in last year's so-called "workshops", where the musicians more often just played a concert or created a musical meeting, rather than run a workshop (Jesse Stewart's facilitation of a workshop, again, being the exception).

My participation in the rest of the weekend festival was minimal, my primary function was as a presenter in the colloquium. I was neither participating as an Artist, nor was I recognized as Press, so my attendance to the festival concerts was incomplete and somewhat "sketchy". That being the case, I will refrain from reviewing the concerts. I will note, however, from what I did see, the concerts *were* well attended by the public. The planning of more accessible jazz and multi-ethnic musical groups like the hip Klezmer group, Paradox Trio, or Jane Burnett and the Spirits of Havana in the jazz tent, and the presentation of the world famous Instant Composers Pool from Holland, or classic jazz trios like the Equal Interest Trio: Joseph Jarman, Leroy Jenkins, and Myra Melford in local church halls pleased both mainstream and avant garde tastes, and fostered broadband public interest and participation. One of my favorites from these public concerts was the appearance of George Lewis with the NOW Orchestra, a tremendously energetic modern big band and gifted group of musicians and composers from the Vancouver area. I found this sort of planning sprinkled with the more esoteric Bookshelf Midnight and afternoon (small theater) concerts for the "musician's musician" to be a very astute "structuring dynamic" for the festival's success.

My respect and admiration goes out to the Guelph community for supporting the leadership of Ajay Heble's vision. Hat's off to Ajay and to everyone who made it possible: from the quality of the artist's participation to the dedication of the community, itself, by it's financial support, it's volunteer force, and its public participation. This *is* truly an example of *Community*.

For further information about the program of the Guelph Jazz Festival, Sept 6-10, 2000 go to www.uoguelph.ca/~jazzfest/

Son Para El Che

Actis Band

Carlo Actis Dato (tenor and baritone sax, bass clarinet) **Massimo Rossi** alto and soprano sax)

Antonio Fontana (guitar)

Federico Marchesano (acoustic and electric basses)

Dario Bruna (drums)

Rocky, jazzy, riff-laden ...LOUD, man I'll bet this band is LOUD live. Manic sax solos over bass and drums, softmachineinthesahara or maybe a cartoon of the sahara. Now the guitarist solos with plenty of effects and distortion, interrupted by blaring horns and bashing drums....short repeat riff and out.

The next piece (AKumo) is intricate, reminds me a bit of New York, then turns a corner into straight swingtime unison lines, all cool and smooth. I keep being reminded of other records, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

ETatu' rocks like a boulder on a sharp point, and stops periodically for odd asides, like directing your attention elsewhere. Riff, riff, riff ..."The Last Blow" kinda sounds like you'd imagine an Italian fusion band would sound, like maybe these guys broke out of a Fellini movie dragging Nino Rota on a rope. I like it, but not everyday.

-jeph jerman

Splasc(h) Records
via Roma, 11
21051 Arcisate
Italy

Carlo Actis Dato
via Boglietto, 7
10035 Mazze (to)
Italy
Tel./Fax: +39-011-9830236

Luft

Iskra

Iskra:

Jorgen Adolfsson- reeds, misc. invented instruments, synthesizer, etc.

Tuomo Haapala- bass violin, misc. invented instruments, etc.

Sune Spangberg- percussion, etc.

Iskra did this one on their 20th anniversary and it shows why they were one of the key Swedish/Scandinavian improv groups in the 70's and 80's. On this disc are free improvs as well as some through-composed pieces. The offerings here give some idea of what ECM might be recording if they were more accepting of the wild and the wooly. There's a very large variety of musical moods here: primitive, reflective, delicate, introverted, and humorous ("Dance of the Gnomes"- don't judge it by its silly title). Iskra consistently avoids free clichés and pitfalls, constantly creating new sound textures, fresh approaches and more than a couple of things to plain marvel at.

Dragon (Of Sweden)

DRCD- 200

Richard Grooms

Ut Gret

Recent Fossils

with, Greg Acker, Joee Conroy, Steve Good, Gary Pahler, Joseph Getter, Mark Englert, Bob Douglas, Steve Roberts, David Stilley, Sam Gray, Keenan Lawler Tom Butsch, Misha Feigin, Andy Rademaker, Henry Kaiser, Davey Williams, Eugene Chadbourne, Greg Goodman, Doug Carrol, Dean Zigoris, Jay Lyons, Marko Novachcoff, Paul Lovens, Todd Hildreth, Mark Bradlyn, Mike Heffley, Peter Hadley

This is a big kahuna for the Grets, maybe even a major opus, a 25th anniversary 3-cd set. They've always been good at pulling rabbits out of hats, but I never expected gamelan to be one of them. The whole first disc is a contemporary Indonesian/western gamelan piece made up of 18 sections which tend to get more Western toward the end before they end up more Javanese than anything. It's largely a pleasing, even challenging experience, both restful and energetic. Very seldom does it sound quite like anything I've heard before, and I've heard a great deal of gamelan. It has a bit of humdrum in tracks 16 and 17, but it almost continually surprised me, not a small feat.

Speaking of gamelan, there's a performance of "In C" by Terry Riley, that gamelan offspring, which takes up Disc 3. A smoothly chugging, sax-colored performance, it's a treat and a half.

Disc 3's "Time Lapse" gives some idea of what an improv-ready Lou Harrison might have been like with its pan-Asian slippery stateliness. "Foreplay" first camps up soundtrack miasma, but later unfortunately succumbs to the bog of it all. "Music To Die By," an elegiac marvel, could also make a good

testament to being alive.

The Grets have done themselves proud here and this a good way to sample their eclecticism and daring.

Ear X-tacy records

EARXTC@aol.com

Richard Grooms

Time Of The Grets

UT GRET

Joe Conroy (guitars, chapman stick, violin, bass, viol de gamba, santoor, psaltry, autoharp, cheng, shamisen, pipa, zitherphonics),

David Stilley (Saxophones, keyboards, bassoon, clarinets, flutes, wind synthesizer, percussion, midi mapping), Gregory Acker (flute, chendra, percussion),

Davey Williams (electric guitar), Eugene Chadbourne (guitar),

Murray Reams (drums),

Henry Kaiser (guitars),

Greg Goodman (piano),

Misha Feigin (voice, text)

Whew, quite a line-up. This is my first hearing of these gentlemen, after hearing ABOUT them for many years. This CD runs the gamut of improvisational types. The first piece is all riffy and intricate with a great (gret) solo from Davey Williams. Sounds like some of it was composed, or at least constructed in the studio. The next bit has jazzy-bluesy-diddley-diddley picking from Chadbourne and skittery drums from Reams, with walking bass and blat/skreet contrabass clarinet from Conroy and Stilley. More completely freeform I'll guess.

The remainder of the disc flits and flirts with many different styles for different pieces and sometimes even within a single piece. I was constantly surprised and delighted by the changes and additions of texture/sound, helped, I'm sure, by the rotating cast of players, but it also seems to be these guys *modus operandi*. A liner note says:
³Zitherphonics is an approach/technique of playing several string instruments simultaneously to invent an orchestra.² I have to wonder what Joe Conroy sounds like playing solo.

Nice packaging, with plenty of photos and tongue-in cheek notes, along with an unnamed bonus track, make for enjoyable extras. I will definitely keep my ears open for more work from Ut Gret, and if you're a fan of many musics, I suggest you do the same.

-jeph jerman

9 Meals From Anarchy

Hanuman Sextet

Andy Haas- sax, raita, morsing, live electronics

Don Florino- lotar, lap steel gtr.

Mia Theodoratus- electric harp

Matt Heyner- bass, erhu

David Gould- drums, perc.

Deepop- drums, perc.

More unexpected and entirely fresh music from the Hanumans. One of the elements that most makes this so welcome, so left-field, is Theodoratus' electric harp. She adds piquant and enlivening darts to each track, helping to make them gravity-defying and disarmingly festive. In fact, there's a joyful, buoyant spirit throughout, partly because the group takes such a casual and unrespectful attitude toward jazz and free improvisation. To them total freedom really is a means to do something that upsets expectations and boundaries. Heyner's mournful erhu and Florino's corkscrewy lap steel bring outside-the-box intelligence and heart to the proceedings. The Hanumans continue to banish constrictions, which is as high a compliment as I can pay them. There's as much originality and sheer surprise here as you'd find in an average 20-30 free albums.

www.myspace.com/RADIOCHINGNEWYORK

contact: radioi-ching@earthlink.nt

Resonant Music 007

Richard Grooms

Days

Swamp Room Records

[Eugene Chadbourne- gtrs., etc.](#)

Gregory Acker- tables, etc.

Todd Hildreth- organ, etc.

Andy Rademaker- bass

Steve Good- clarinet, etc.

Gary Pahler- drums

Dean Zigoris- mellotron, etc.

Chadbourne, some members of Ut Gret and others make an lp employing overly ambitious 10 year olds' concepts of psychedelia. That's just the starting point.

It's a roller coaster ahead and the kids-now-adults are well fueled for the ride. Then

they start driving the thing. I've never heard the Grets or Chad do conventional song

structures before. It's true alternative rock with a nod to Half Japanese.

Like them, it

celebrates amateurism and arrested development. It's all covers here:

Donovan, the Stones,

other sixties stars these guys grew up with. Mom and Dad have left the den and the house

and the state and you and your young friends (kids, not adults?) realize they're gone for days.

Then they're gone for your whole life but you're still 10. Then there's the roller coaster yet to come. All of this on two see-thru psych-colored elpees with artwork drawn by whacked middle schoolers. Limited to 1,000 copies. You couldn't produce this on a mass scale. Enjoy and bring plenty of Kool-Aid. The rec room never had it so good.

Swamp Room Records

Auf Dem Loh 18

30167 Hannover

www.swamproom.de

Light That Fills The World

John Luther Adams

Marty Walker- bass clarinet

Amy Knoles-vibes and marimba

Bryan Pezzone-piano

Nathaniel Reichman- elec. keyboards, sound design

Robin Lorentz-violin

Barry Newton-double bass

Three compositions by Adams that confirm his marvelous, chilly sense of northern space. “Farthest Place” is a lush, brightly elegant, somewhat Steve Reichian piece that puts the listener firmly in the arctic, the keyboardists and Knoles providing a luminous bed of rhythms. A bright discovery. The title work is less sumptuous than this because it’s mysterious and withholds something. But it’s just as enjoyable and near-zero. “Immeasurable Space of Tones” is somewhere between the first and second pieces, again filling the listener with a sense of great space, cold and wonder. In fact all three tracks seem like parts of a larger piece. Their titles don’t exaggerate, and they would, like many Cold Blue releases, appeal to fans of holy minimalism, even though I haven’t seen any info that specifically indicates that any of the label’s composers are mystics.

Cold Blue

CB 0010

www.coldbluemusic.com

The Place We Began

John Luther Adams- composer

The man who no longer needs to be called “the other John Adams” recently discovered some early 70s tapes me made and forgot. Using new technology, he manipulated these reel-to-reels to achieve radical new ends.

“In a Room” and “The Place We Began” are both based on feedback projected into an empty room. “In a Room” is pleasantly introverted, if somewhat slight. “The Place We Began” has static playing a subordinated role, like a fundamental, and, at times, an almost dominant role. Another track features many containers Adams had set outside his house during the rain. The tapes of this are manipulated to sublime levels. Like Morton Feldman’s works (Feldman is a major Adams influence), there is a feeling of hallucinatory stasis. Indefinable, gauzy curtains of raindrops rise and fall magnificently. This is pointillism of a very high order. It makes musical Impressionism seem sturdy by comparison. Stunning and revelatory, one of the most gorgeous musical pieces I’ve heard in many years. It alone is worth the price of the album.

Cold Blue Music

CB 0032

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Duets

Susan Allen harp,

Vinny Golia piccolo, C, alto & bass flutes, strich, Bb & bass clarinets, soprano saxophone & contrabassoon

A bass clarinet flourish and they're off! Harp and horns seem like an unlikely pairing, but then again, maybe it's just because I'd never heard it before. This disc slips in and out of classical sounding stretches, quick, stop-on-a-dime-and-turn forays and weird otherworldly soundtrack music. It rarely goes way way out though, something that I find I crave often these days. I guess after days of listening to nothing but wind and rain and bird sounds, tonal music seems a bit odd.

jeph jerman

9Winds
PO Box 10082
Beverly Hills CA 90213
members @aol.com/ninewinds/

Dreaming With Serpents

Gustavo Aguilar -percussion

featuring: Wadada Leo Smith-trumpet,
Todd Sickafoose - bass,
John Bergamo - percussion

Immediately engaging, with the rich sounds of a multimallet percussion solo with processed drums, *Zamzam*, *A Ki-River Spring* by Wadada Leo Smith, *Apa* a duet for trumpet, congas, voice and ankle bells bring out old world primal authenticity. *Tulumbaz* for solo timpani by John Bergamo harken the earlies metal drum version of the instrument. An eery and warm physicality prevails in the music of Aguilar/Bergamo in *Faces We See, Hearts We Don't*.

Compositions married into the moments movements and rattles bring back the visions and emotions of the ancient ancestors. The music of Gustavo Aguilar is beautiful, introspective and passionate. There is a very high level of artistry and expression to be found in these wonderful percussion tone paintings.

-LaDonna Smith

Acoustic Levitation
2626 East 13th , Ste. 2K
Brooklyn, NY 11235
AcousticLv@aol.com

Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise

Liz Albee- trumpet, shell, electronics

B. Deiler- drums

Killick Hinds- guitar, electronics, voice

Larry Ocha- tenor, soprano saxes

D. Porter- voice

If I misspelled any of the above info I offer apologies. The liner notes are very small-even with a magnifying glass. Same issue with the song titles only much more so.

This isn't gas music from Jupiter, it's post-everything music from Georgia. Blisteringly loud jazz-related material is here, and it's okay I suppose, but it's the watery/gargley/grunting content that is much more novel. It's funny, too, which is always welcome in the free improv corner of the world. There's a cut that gradually becomes the Tibetan monks with the ultra-long trumpets and all that melds with a sort-of jazz big band. It sounds unworkable on paper but it succeeds totally. On another track a cookie monster does a moody soul-funk outing; this one is good campy noise and a fine parody of adolescent gothic rock. Later on hip-hop and current dance music are put to surprising uses. A frequently successful pomo diversion, this album has plenty that rises and makes a fine mess.

Solponticello

S7 025

Richard Grooms

Concentration

Susan Alcorn

Alcorn- pedal steel gtr.

Here are seven collaborations Susan Alcorn, high priestess of boundary-pushing pedal steel music, did for the High Zero Festival in Baltimore in 2004. In Alcorn's hands the instrument is capable of an astonishing range of sounds. If you've only heard mainstream musicians play the instrument, you probably wouldn't recognize her stuff as pedal steel at all. Don't let that stop you (I didn't think it was about to). These ensemble pieces are highly knitted together; Alcorn is but one voice in the mix. "Four Mountains, Four Rivers" is gamut-stretching-which I guess is only appropriate considering the title. "Queen is Always Pregnant" charts a furtively coherent path through what you get when the radio fades in and out of channels at night. There's high-level musicianship throughout, it demands your utmost concentration, and it's more than worth it. A decidedly intense

experience.

Recorded- 017

www.highzero.org

Richard Grooms

Limn

Nakatani Chen Duo

Tatsuya Nakatani-percussion

Audrey Chen-cello, voice

Susan Alcorn-pedal steel guitar

If it's dramatic sweep you want this is a more than fine place to start. Chen is one of the leading practitioners of extended vocal techniques, if this album is representative. She can convey wonder, pain, mystery and so much else it'd take a small encyclopedia to describe it all. Nakatani's a highly sensitive partner and commands a panoply of percussion devices with utmost effectiveness and imagination. Some of the tracks here were recorded live in various Southern cities in 2005. Wish they'd come to Birmingham, but there's always the future, innit? Meanwhile, the chthonic reigns on this disc. That's not an unusual thing for a free improv group to pull off, but this duo/trio do it as well as anyone, and of course Alcorn is a wonder-worker.

www.hhproductions.org

HH-6

LIVE AT VELVET LOUNGE, VOL 1

CD

Fred Anderson Quartet

Fred Anderson, tenor sax

Bill Brimfield, trumpet

Tatsu Aoki, bass

Chad Taylor, drums

There seems to be some resemblance in Fred Anderson's improvisational style to Sonny Simmons, but "resemblance" is all it is. He's a B-I-G guy, & he PLAYS big! The group is one of the most tightly knit ensembles I've EVER heard. & tho' it's true that there are examples (c'mon, YOU've heard 'em too) of improv quartets that sound like lounge lizard kinda' stuff - FRED'S DON'T! I mean, this is one H-O-T set. There are only 4 tracks, but they are extended listening experiences, so you won't walk away from the listen thirsting for more. This is improv people will WANT to hear. Brimfield's trumpet rides a wave most surfers seldom see, much less grab hold of like this. On the first track, I was dismayed to hear (what sounded like it was going to be) some half-hearted bass stride stuff from Aoki, but by 15 or 20 seconds in, he was compin' along at stellar speed, & Chad's drums help to (unobtrusively) point out the rhythmic paths that need to be explored. There are few albums I review that are this good.. this is a CLASSIC, & merits my MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. In fact, it's such a keeper that you should rush out & BUY it today! **-Rotcod Zzaj**

Asian Improv Records
123 Townsend, Suite 315
San Francisco, CA 94107
USA

A Page Of Madness

Aono Jikken

William Satake Blauvelt (Khaen, Odaiko, Uchiwa-odaiko set, Gong, Bell Wheel, Taiko Set, Waterphone, Metal Duct, Afuche, Hioshige, Xylimba, Rainstick, Wind chime, Tympani, Bamboo, Chinese Opera Cymbals, Sound Toys, Chappa Rinbo, Frame Drum, Voice) Yoko Murao (Khaen, Rattles, Castanets, Bottle Drum, Toy Drum, Voice, Ratchet, Atarigame, Wood Knocker, Tibetan Bowl), Susie Kozawa (Khaen, Bell Wheel, Wood Knocker, Ratchet, 2X4 Wood Blocks, Sound Toys, Autoharp, Bass Baliphone, Bowed Cymbal, Kelp Trumpet, Voice.) Mike Shannon (Suruti Box, Harmonica, Bodhran, Rattles, Bells, Erhu, Kalimba, Beene, Zurna, Rhiata, Chin-chin, Chinese Opera gong, Voice, Dumbek, Dilruba, Kanjira, Bottillia, Bowed Bells,.) Esther Sugai (Khaen, Uchiwa-Daiko Set, Harmonica, Fue, Flute, Kelp Oboe-sax, Voice, Kelp Clarinet, Rinbo, Kelp Trumpet)

Aono Jikken (pronounced Ah-Oh-No Gee-Ken), or **Blue Field Experiment**, is a sound/music/movement/multi-media ensemble based in Asian/American aesthetics and a structured improvisational performing style. (from the liner notes).What we have here is a soundtrack for

Teinosuke Kinugasa's 1926 silent film 'A Page Of Madness'. To tell the truth, though I would've liked to've seen the film, I enjoy this CD on it's sonic merits alone. The instrumentation is unique, to say the least, and the music conjures many moods, ominous, silly, peaceful, raucus. As with any film music, there are often quite abrupt changes of style/sound/mood and this helps keep things interesting. There is definitely a narrative feel to the whole, though it doesn't come across as contrived or forced, as does much modern film music. This could just as easily be a disc of top-rate improvisors utilizing a huge assortment of sound-makers. Nor does it remind me at all of attempts by people from different cultures to blend their various cultural sounds. These people know what they're doing.

If you're ever in Seattle and catch wind of a showing of "A Page Of Madness" with a live score, I suggest you try to attend. This is one fascinating group. Oh yeah, the film sounds pretty swell too.

-jeph jerman

Gold Mountain Supply Company
William Satake Blauvelt
12043 17th Ave. N.E.
Seattle WA 98125
ph: 206 368 5645
e-mail: blauvelt@seattleu.edu

Descansos, Past

Jim Fox

Barry Newton- double bass

Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick- cello

Jessica Catron- cello

Aniela Perry- cello

Rachel Arnold- cello

“Descanso” is Spanish for rest, peace and quiet and those words give a rough description of the music on this cd single. Newton’s strong, stately bass supports and departs from the able cellos, and the whole adds up to austere beauty. This platter does suggest a place of calm, but the emotions connected with lamentation, penitence and sorrow are also in play here. A fine record is the result.

Cold Blue

CB 0021

Richard Grooms

Dial

Otani Yasuhiro and Aoki Tatsu

Yasuhiro- Macintosh Power Book 3400

Tatsu- bass and electronics

"The Glimpse" is a charged, insistent, hypnotic piece with haunting human and animal sounds so woven into its electronic belly that genus and order don't matter anymore. The rest of this recording is depersonalized and unmemorable. These two, when in the future they go with the strength of "Glimpse," will make a heckuva winner, and deep ecologists will shout for joy.

-Richard Grooms

Asian Improv Records
123 Townsend St. #345
San Francisco, Calif. 94107

Winter Pilgrim Arriving

Martin Archer (sonic dp, synthesizers, sopranino sax, Bflat and Bass clarinets, consort of recorders, vioelectronics),
Derek Saw (cornet),
Simon H. Fell (double bass),
Tim Cole (acoustic guitar),
Charlie Collins (flute, sampling),
Gino Robair (percussion),
James Archer (amplified Objects),

**Mick Beck (bassoon),
Sedayne (crwth).**

This CD is comprised of compositions built up in the studio from improvisations, which are added to, manipulated or otherwise transformed by their settings. In the notes accompanying the disc, Archer speaks of music from a certain period, the late sixties/early seventies work of the Canterbury school of progressive rock, and the concomittant folk-rock sounds that were coming out of England during the same period, and how it conjured for him the feeling that music could be/ do anything. These compositions give me a similar feeling, but they sound completely modern. Unlike a lot of other constructions of this type that I've heard, the patchwork and various graftings don't come across as such. This music sounds like it all happened live, made by an army of sympatico musicians with an arsenal of equipment and a communal working approach. The sounds themselves are often quite disperate, but they are put together in such a way as to make them WORK magically. I'm impressed as hell by these little assemblages, and each time I listen, the amount of detail unfolds in a new way for me.

In the same set of notes, (a press release actually), Archer sadly admits that this may be the last disc from his label, due to a lack of commercial viability. He brings up the point that there seem to be far more people making "out" music these days than buying it, and while I'm sorry that his label may produce no further examples of his work, I'm hopeful that the sheer numbers of people investigating sound may usher in a period of renewed importance in listening as a past-time. Maybe someday soon we could all learn to make sounds together as an everyday thing, and get away from the idea of sound as a commodity. Hmmm.

Jeph Jerman

**Discus
PO Box 658
Sheffield S10 3YR
England**

www.discus.mcmail.com

Richard Grooms

Heritage and Ringtones

Martin Archer

Archer- reeds, keyboards, vioelectronics, processing, drum programs

Ingar Zach- perc.

Rhodri Davies- harp

Simon Fell- double bass

Julie Cole- voice

Tim Cole- acoustic gtr.

Masayo Asahara- processing

Archer combines electronics and acoustics, live playing and tapes, but most importantly, he blends harmony and disharmony, and does this in ways that are complimentary, unexpected and original. And on a few cuts he combines his love for English traditional folk music with free playing. I enjoy both these categories, but have never heard them Cuisinarted. They work blended as well as in tandem on this disc. Grace and rattling, taste and junk, convention and radical culture- all of these are here, and they judiciously balance each other out. Archer & Co. have good ears and good sense, which come together not often enough in the musical world. An unexpected treat.

Discus

Discus 18 CD

www.discus-music.co.uk

Richard Grooms

Winter Pilgrim Arriving

**Martin Archer (sonic dp, synthesizers, sopranino sax, Bflat and Bass clarinets, consort of recorders, vioelectronics),
Derek Saw (cornet),
Simon H. Fell (double bass),
Tim Cole (acoustic guitar),
Charlie Collins (flute, sampling),
Gino Robair (percussion),
James Archer (amplified Objects),**

**Mick Beck (bassoon),
Sedayne (crwth).**

This CD is comprised of compositions built up in the studio from improvisations, which are added to, manipulated or otherwise transformed by their settings. In the notes accompanying the disc, Archer speaks of music from a certain period, the late sixties/early seventies work of the Canterbury school of progressive rock, and the concomittant folk-rock sounds that were coming out of England during the same period, and how it conjured for him the feeling that music could be/ do anything. These compositions give me a similar feeling, but they sound completely modern. Unlike a lot of other constructions of this type that I've heard, the patchwork and various graftings don't come across as such. This music sounds like it all happened live, made by an army of sympatico musicians with an arsenal of equipment and a communal working approach. The sounds themselves are often quite disperate, but they are put together in such a way as to make them WORK magically. I'm impressed as hell by these little assemblages, and each time I listen, the amount of detail unfolds in a new way for me.

In the same set of notes, (a press release actually), Archer sadly admits that this may be the last disc from his label, due to a lack of commercial viability. He brings up the point that there seem to be far more people making "out" music these days than buying it, and while I'm sorry that his label may produce no further examples of his work, I'm hopeful that the sheer numbers of people investigating sound may usher in a period of renewed importance in listening as a past-time. Maybe someday soon we could all learn to make sounds together as an everyday thing, and get away from the idea of sound as a commodity. Hmmm.

Jeph Jerman

**Discus
PO Box 658
Sheffield S10 3YR
England**

www.discus.mcmail.com

Disklaimer

Bruce Arnold- elec. gtr., Supercollider

Tom Hamilton- electronics

Downbeat magazine praised another effort by these guys, saying it evoked John Abercrombie or John Scofield from a quarter century ago- only fresher. After listening to the first couple of tracks I'd say that's all true, only it's not fresh. Then track 3 came

up. Now we're into something original, I thought. The two put their duets through brand-new PC technology, but I heard something more like the first generation of computer musicians. Better than the beginning, but still no great shakes. Cut 4 has beautifully weird electronics, and there's no way to tell where one musician leaves off and the other begins. I just don't see why Arnold does imitative solos when he can process his guitar so it doesn't sound like a guitar and so it involves me a lot. Why give semi-rock structure to music so out there it only weighs it down? Cut off all moorings, I say.

[Muse Eek](#)

[MSK 123](#)

[<www.muse-eek.com>](http://www.muse-eek.com)

Richard Grooms

Heritage and Ringtones

Martin Archer

Archer- reeds, keyboards, vioelectronics, processing, drum programs

Ingar Zach- perc.

Rhodri Davies- harp

Simon Fell- double bass

Julie Cole- voice

Tim Cole- acoustic gtr.

Masayo Asahara- processing

Archer combines electronics and acoustics, live playing and tapes, but most importantly, he blends harmony and disharmony, and does this in ways that are complimentary, unexpected and original. And on a few cuts he combines his love for English traditional folk music with free playing. I enjoy both these categories, but have never heard them Cuisinarted. They work blended as well as in tandem on this disc. Grace and rattling, taste and junk, convention and radical culture- all of these are here,

and they judiciously balance each other out. Archer & Co. have good ears and good sense, which come together not often enough in the musical world. An unexpected treat.

Discus

Discus 18 CD

www.discus-music.co.uk

Richard Grooms

Ashik - “Dancing Lightly”

Ashik - Violin, guitar, bass, keyboard, percussion, whistle and sampler

Nina Nanda - Wordless vocal and vocal samples

“Dancing lightly on the edge of time, like the morning dew on the edge of a leaf.”

The tunes on this release brightens the mood anywhere by incorporating Ashik’s original sound with the old dance of Ireland, Hungary, Russia and rural America. With the violin leading the way, Ashik also brings in many other instruments but allows this offering to remain light. You will find your toes tapping and you may want to twirl your partner to & fro. A great, timeless CD for all! - Robin Taylor

CONTACT: Dancing Leaf Music, 1705 14th Street #224, Boulder, CO 80302 USA;
Phone/Fax - 303.546.6005; E-mail - Ashik@RMII.com.

Michael Fahres

The Tubes

Fahres- composer, tapes

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Parik Nazarian- voice

Mark Atkins- didgeridoo

On this Cold Blue disc are three compositions with room for a good bit of improvisation. Starting off is "Sevan", a sort of lament for the Armenian lake of that name, a victim of industrialization. Parik Nazarian sings from inside one of the abandoned metal pipes that line part of the lake, producing vocal clouds that suggest a Central Asian Ligeti sound world. This voice alternates with a scraping, percussive noise which forces the listener back to earth, then it's the clouds again, then the scraping, and so on, making for a somewhat disorienting but pleasing whole. If you take that scrape down to a smoothly-textured sound, you'll get the very heavy breathing of "The Tubes", built on a tape of volcanic rock tubes that channel forced ocean water. Fahres recorded them on site on the shores of an unspoiled island that is part of the Canary Island group. This tape (or tapes, maybe?), used as a rhythm track, is accompanied by Jon Hassell and his signature electronically-hushed trumpet and Mark Atkins' didgeridoo, three sorts of tubes joining together for an exploration of hollowness, fullness, emptiness and solidness. I say that the tape is accompanied as if it's a musician because it holds an equal place with the two humans here; it's a kind of musician itself, partly because all three tube sounds work so well together. It's scary relaxation music, full of the contradictions that phrase implies. "Coimbra 4, Mundi Theatre", which Fahres assembled out of tapes of a Portuguese music festival he did not attend, is another strange attractor as it floats in the mind like a harmonious, misarchived trace of musical memory. It is musique concrete of a very beguiling sort.

Fahres' pieces are haunting and they stay in the mind in a calming and elliptical way. Post-Classical music at it's best.

Cold Blue – CB 0024

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Blue Rhizome

New Quartet

Karl Seigfried- bass, gtr.

Greg Ward- saxophones, flute

Carmel Raz- violin

Chris Avgerin- drums, perc.

Blue Rhizome

New Quartet

Karl Seigfried- bass, gtr.

Greg Ward- saxophones, flute

Carmel Raz- violin

Chris Avgerin- drums, perc.

A varied document this, encompassing Celtic-tinged jazz, jazz rock, hard rock and a couple of pastoral pieces where Raz shines. All the group members are very strong. Recommended to jazz fans bored by conventional jazz categories.

Imaginary Chicago Records

IGR 003

www.imaginarychicago.com

Meanwhile, Back in Sheffield...

Derek Bailey-electric guitar
Mick Beck-tenor saxophone, bassoon and whistles
Paul Hession-drumset

A live recording of "non-idiomatic" Derek Bailey's first gig for several years in his hometown of Sheffield, England. Invited by native Sheffield musical partners Mick Beck and Paul Hession, Derek Bailey returned to his geographical home, where he grew up and forged the birthing of free improvisation in Europe. Afterwards, a Londoner, Bailey had spent the last few years of his life in Barcelona, Spain and sometimes liked to come "home" to get away from the heat of its summer. As taken from some of Mick Beck's notes of 2005, his Yorkshire trip met this criterion. "Sheffield's meteorological response was dramatic - cold, and so much rain that it necessitated buckets under a few drips. Bailey's mainly reflective performance is complemented by Hession's rhythmically grounded, creative manipulations of the conventional drum kit and Beck's underground explorations with bassoon, tenor sax and whistles. The three tracks, *After the Red Deer*, *Raining*, and *Buckets* present the majority of the concert, recorded live by Chris Trent, and supported by Sheffield's Other Music, and staged in the hall of Sheffield Royal Society of the Blind (a public venue used for a variety of musical occasions).

The music is reflective, and you can hear the collective musical ambience and understatement that comes only from the acoustics of the damp. An inward feeling throughout, a rare snapshot of the slowing down of the great master, and a beautiful passage, if one of the last. -LS

Bailey- acoustic guitar

Derek Bailey's music has such a fiercely uncompromising reputation, but it has never attracted me at all. A few years ago, however, he was said to have mellowed. People said he no longer made the thorny and angular records he was famous for. I'm one who welcomes pretty much all manner of music, noise and noise music, but Bailey Old put me off. Would Bailey New be any better? They said he was even doing standards now that you could recognize as standards, you could recognize the tunes. Speaking of recognition, if you'd played *In Play* to me in a blindfold test, I wouldn't have suspected it was Bailey. It's that radically different. It is gentle, delicate and totally comfortable with small gestures. (Well, the small gestures part is Old Bailey, too). It's a shock and a revelation to me. It needs to be said, however, that this isn't as accessible as, say, Ralph Towner or anyone you'd hear on public radio. But it's more than worth paying attention to. I'm now a convert of sorts and look forward to his *Ballads* album. I really am warming up to this one. Come home, Derek. All is forgiven. Bailey continues to confound me. That's his job, after all.

www.samadisound.com

Richard Grooms

Liquid Metal Dreaming

Robert Evans- crwth, tambura, lyre, fiddle, voice

Laurie Scott Baker- double bass, electric upright bass, perc.

Nine tracks using the harmonic series in fresh and inventive ways. Sounding simultaneously medieval and highly contemporary, this is a blend of Hildegard of Bingen and the California Cold Blue aesthetic. Calming, edifying-even exalted at times-this is a must for the just intonation faithful.

Musicnow

Richard Grooms

Lion's Eye / Lion's Tale

Pauline Oliveros- composer

Berkeley Gamelan Ensemble- all instruments

A 9-piece gamelan ensemble with “expanded range” describes the BGE, or at least the BGE as you hear it here. BGE member Carter Scholz also plays a computer sampler (not part of the trad BGE lineup) which allows notes to be sustained for long periods of time or at a phenomenally fast rate (up to 1600 beats per minute). Despite all this prefacing, this is not as radical-sounding as you might expect. It sounds clearly different from traditional Indonesian gamelan music, but not jarringly so. The parts that aren't field recording material, which is to say all of it, grow organically out of the Javanese gamelan tradition. I'm very familiar with Oliveros' history, but if I'd heard this in a blindfold contest I'd have never guessed it was her. I say this as a compliment. She continues to surprise me in the best ways. This is a marvelously odd and entrancing work.

Deep Listening

DL 28-2006

Richard Grooms

Echoes

Abbey Rader- drums, perc.
Billy Bang- violin

I first saw Billy Bang 11 years ago when he was in my town playing with the Sun Ra Arkestra. He stood out in that band, which is saying a lot. This is the first of his solo albums I've heard and it's a humdinger. His puckish, gutsy bluesy electric violin is thrilling. The bass sounds are always there or implied. He doesn't get into his head too much like so many improv guys. He keeps himself always rooted in the best kind of way. And yet he incorporates 20th Century classical compositional techniques into his mix. Rader is fully his match. He's across the spectrum, exciting, a killer. At times reminiscent of Billy Higgins, he's got his own sound and is a corker. See these guys live and watch them tear the roof off the sucker like jazz seldom does anymore. This cd confirms that they're at the top of their collective game.

Richard Grooms

Abbay CD0055-2
www.abbevrader.com

M' Lumba vs. Kobalt 6

Spinning Tourists in a City of Ghosts

Rob Von Roy, Ron Banji, Kurt Leege

M' Lumbo reminds me of White Noise, a doozy electronic band of the mid-Seventies that combined a vague pop sensibility with the lazy, ambient sound of far-off radio stations fading in and out of your tuner. They anticipated a lot of rave stuff by 15 years, not to mention 80's electro pop. The best stuff here, such as "The Soul Exchange," is that kind of thing at its best. Some of it does, however, succumb to the boredom that can creep into those shifting stations. At times it sounds like a logical outgrowth of the Beatles' "Revolution 9," although here there's not as much affinity with conventional musical sense. If folks are tired of the easy listening music that characterizes so much of rave and techno, this is where they may want to go. Happy landings to them.

-Richard Grooms

Unit Circle Records
www.unitcircle.com

Great Sunset

William Hooker (drums,poetry),
Mark Hennen (piano),
Lewis Barnes(trumpet),

Charles Compo (tenor and baritone sax, flute),
Richard Keene (soprano and tenor sax, flute).

A short horn fanfare opens the first piece, Hooler exclaims "Yeah!"
The horns repeat and then we're into a drums piano dialogue of
frenetic energy. Horns re-enter to play more little riffs, and then queue
up for solos., with Hooker inserting vocalisms, and occasional words, along the way.
Reminds me of many records in my collection, and if
I don't remind myself periodically who it is I'm listening to, I fall into believing it's
some long lost 1960's New York session. Better sound quality perhaps, but the spirit is
there.

The press material that accompanied this cd states that "this release
emphasizes William Hooker's compositions within a jazz ensemble format", and I can
hear a difference between this recording and his
other work that I've heard. A little more cohesiveness, a little more of a BAND
ambience,(the photograph of Hooker on the back of the CD hides his face), and what
the ensemble lacks in "tightness," they seem to make up for in feel.

The cd is broken up into individual tracks, but it's really one
thirty-eight minute suite. I love long-form compositions and
I love Free Jazz. And, while I'm not a big Hooker fan, I do love
this CD.

-jeph jerman

Warm-O-Brisk
P.O.Box 3491
Newport R.I. 02840

Continuo

Frederico Barabino- classical gtr. and electronics

Sergio Merce- amplified objects and electronics

What if that pretty, repetitive siren call of New Age music actually rose to a higher
strata and did something significant? That seems like a fit description of this
modest little CD. Only about 28 minutes long: the duo provides gentle washes and
scrapings of acoustics and electronics that rise out of their lonely, haunted world.
Not comfy, but serene. Not easy, but involving.

[<www. barabinomercer.8m.com>](http://www.barabinomercer.8m.com)

Richard Grooms

Jim Connolly and the Gove County String Quartet

Jim Connolly-contrabass

Sally Barr-violin

Kirsten Monke-violola

Laura Hackstein-violin

I wasn't that thrilled with the last Connolly project I reviewed (*Time Stops to Visit*) but I thought it had scads of promise. This outing goes a long way to fulfilling that promise. Fin de siecle Americana gets modern and cinematic on this record, a somewhat Kronos Quartet postmodernism crossed with quite a few strands from the homegrown warehouse: hymns, jazz, silent movie soundtracks, folk, Ben Johnston, and Dvorak's new world. It's a clear and powerful success. This group has helped Connolly to create a new type of American composition. Three, four, five cheers!

pfMENTUM

PFMCD 044

www.pfmentum.com

Richard Grooms

HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN

improvisations for oboe and four keyboards

Marianne Osiel, oboe

with

Robert Barrows, pipe organ

Denman Maroney, hyperpiano

Jordan Rudess, synthesizer

John Simon, piano

The new CD by Marianne Osiel brings an immediate aura of repose and peace

into the moment. Introspective, very alive, investigational, both in both sonic quality,

and musical explorations, the inner voice that sings through the instruments reveal

the subtle qualities of gentle light through sound. A sound that is spaced in a meditation,

a flow which is not forced or created, but noticed. A very internal, etherial, and

even spiritual offering, this work is a masterwork of beauty and quiet energy.

Improvised freely in the movement of the moment, the oboe is like a lonely pilgrim singing

in the wake of the dark harmonic settings and movements played by the pipe organ, the piano,

and synthesized backgrounds. The quote on the back cover from L. Cohen says it well,

"Ring the bells that still can ring.

Forget your perfect offering

There's a crack in everything.

That's how the Light gets in."

The pleasing ambience will surely affect mindful stillness in the

contemplative listener. ~ LaDonna Smith

mosiel@optonline.net

www.marianneosiel.com

My Dear Siegfried

David Behrman

Behrman- keyboards, electronics

Thomas Buckner, Maria Ludovici, Eric Barsness- vocalists

Peter Zummo- trombone

Ralph Samuelson- shakuhachi

Tod Hamilton- engineering and special effects

WW1-era antiwar British poet Siegfried Sassoon and American S.N. Behrman exchanged spirited letters and poetry for many years. David Behrman (apparently no relation to S.N.), inspired by this correspondence, programmed his electronic musical devices to interact with vocalists reciting some of these texts. The results are uneven. Behrman's instrumental subtleties are as wonderful here as they have been throughout his career. He is one of the 20th century's most gifted electronic music-makers (There, I said it). But the pastoral gentleness coming from his machinery is not very compatible with the largely unmusical character of the recited texts. I think it would've been much more preferable to let the listener silently read the texts while listening to the music; the two aren't inherently mismatched. An exception is the piece "Everyone Sang," the ecstatic poem Sassoon wrote to commemorate the end of WW1. The electronics fit well with the words, and that's mostly because the poem here is sung, not spoken.

Disc 2 in this 2-cd set is more enjoyable. Five more newly-recorded pieces by the composer are here and are all outstanding. "QSRL" and "Viewfinder" are Behrman at his lovely best, the electronic devices issuing music ranging from the gentle to the transcendently lyrical. "Touch Tones" and "Pools of Phase Locked Loops" are far more beautiful than their hardware titles would suggest. To say that disc 2 is worth the cost of the whole set would be a great understatement. Followers of Behrman won't want to miss this set and newcomers should try the second disc first.

Experimental Intermedia

XI 129

www.xirecords.org

Richard Grooms

Perlon

Ignaz Schick(electronics),
Jorg Maria Zeger (guitars),
Burkhard Beins (percussion).

Beginning with (very) softly fingerpicked electric guitar, Perlon slowly build up a dense, detail-packed drone. Unequal parts ECM spaceyness, 1980's tape-trader loop madness, free jazz and electroacoustic mayhem, these three gentlemen mix seemingly disparate elements into a breathing whole. They take their time, letting the sounds hang around and become dissociated, as when a word is repeated until it loses it's meaning. String a bunch of these unknowns together and they'll eventually cohere by the sheer weight of their mystery.

They also suggest the union of the atomistic and laminate ways of structuring sound., which is also happening here. Slow down the atoms till they laminate with the layers, the loops break up under distortion to reveal their particulate core, and the two, again, mesh.

The quietness of a lot of this disc suprised me. Things seem to disappear even though some vestige of their passing hangs in the air. Expectation. (Yes, the disc is still playing). Now far off metal sounds, close-up shufflings of backwards cards,...a hint of melody. Rather than suggest timidity, these long quiet interludes show careful attention to the sounds, allowing them their own voices before rubbing the edges of them together to see if they'll stick.

We're into the second track , low bass thumps...cackles of metal, squeaks...unamplified guitar notes (is it a loop?...waiting for it to come(Eround again)... thumps...(yes it's a loop)...squeaks descending in pitch...quiet cracklings...The loops are filling in the spaces between the other sounds. Density. Detail...

jeph jerman

Zarek
Weserstr. 22
D-10247 Berlin
Germany
info@zangimusic.de
www.zangimusic.de

Impropera

Non Credo

Joseph Berardi- sampling, keyboards, samples

Kira Vollman- voice, bass clarinet, prolo tape, glockenspiel, hand perc., lyrics

This duo makes you believe that art rock could actually come up with something interesting. It's what Tom Waits might do if he went wholly avant garde and it might get you to believe that Brecht/Weill still live. Not bad for just one record. L.A.-based, Non Credo try to embrace it all and make B-movie sense of everything. Or nonsense, I should say. Refreshing, unpretentious and self-mocking, it's not one to miss by any stretch. Vollman is a phenomenal vocalist-I think I'd rather listen to her than Diamanda Galas, who covers much the same waterfront. Berardi is equally impressive in his sphere. It's best to not concern yourself as to whether this is pop, art rock, improv or what, just jump right in and play (in every sense).

Gazul

GA 8683 AR

www.musearecords.com

Richard Grooms

Samm Bennett

Secrets of Teaching Yourself Music

IMJ 516

Bennett- Kong Wave Drum, perc., synth., Casio, cd player, etc.

Long one of the most interesting and plainly enjoyable off all improvisers, Bennett is a master of the techno tribalism he employs here. He can do as much with this genre as anyone else, and he never lets it get in the techno doldrums as it is wont to in lesser hands. He puts drama, humor and narrative into it always and this makes all the difference. This isn't dance music like almost all techno tribal but it has regular rhythms. And unlike a lot of free improve music, it's fairly easy to follow, yet challenging nonetheless. I like the easy balance between free forms and structure and the fact that it's so very human. I feel like I go somewhere interesting with Bennett. With too many free players everything is so disconnected and ever-changing you're only left with anti-narrative. There's too much imagination and not enough skill. Bennett avoids these traps. His sense of structure give him more options, not fewer, and this makes him more interesting and individual. Skill and imagination are here in balance.

IMJ

[<www.japanimprov.com>](http://www.japanimprov.com)

Richard Grooms

Blind Pursuits

CD

Blind Pursuits

Jim Staley (trombone), Bora Bergman (piano), Phoebe Legere (voice, accordion)

The ten pieces on this 59.5 minute audio CD feature duets between Staley and Bergman or Staley and Legere. No single piece has all three artists on it.

Program director for the hot NYC performance space [Roulette](#), Staley mostly keeps himself to one of three types of trombone playing, long tones, mumbling jazz style, and a digeridu style. He also plays some difference tones and does some jazz work with a mute. Bergman's style is a fast atonal frenzy of short notes and grand gestures. Ostensibly, this is due to his ambidextrous approach to the piano.

Classically trained Legere shows incredible improv music and poetry chops, both automatic and prewritten. Her voice can transition from just about any style and emotional tone to any other with great control and dexterity. Her accordion playing is an understated series of chord progressions. Her love song on track 5 is anything but understated. Is this the same artist as the Phoebe Legere of pop and country legend?

The pieces transition from the seriousness of the fast and furious Staley/Bergman gestalten to the humorous and intense Staley/Legere dynamic. Quite a wild ride, I assure you. - [Glenn Engstrand](#)

Trios for Deep Voices

Christopher Roberts

Roberts-double bass

Mark Morton-double bass

James Bergman-double bass

Roberts' inspiration for these trios is his immersion in New Guinean traditional music, though his own pieces sound nothing like New Guinean music. They are recognizably contemporary American classical music. "Kon Burunemo" could be an updated version of Dvorak's American quartet. "Flying" conveys the effort and the exultation of the act itself. The other three tracks come off as rather too severe for me. They don't have the almost homespun and naïve charm of the two works above. Advocates of mainstream American classical modernism will be more receptive to these. Roberts has a strong individual voice. If he repeats the idiosyncrasies of those pieces in the future he'll be a composer to reckon with.

Cold Blue

CB 0030

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Musica Genera	
----------------------	--

Bergmark and Klapper

Johannes Bergmark- 19+ instruments and devices

Martin Klapper- 7+ devices and toys

This'll do to your stiff notions of musical propriety what a good massage will do to your knotted muscles. It's a *Popular Mechanics* way of knowledge. It's what some people think of when they think of the lunacy of free improv, and I like it like that. What Lord Buckley would've called "*a gassah!*" and that's because someone left the id out in the rain and I don't think they'll ever find that Betty Crocker book again.

Bergmark and Klapper are just what the root doctor ordered.

www.rwert.art.pl

Richard Grooms

Thus

Tripod Mind

Neil Feather & John Berndt- Nondo, Melocipede, Vibro-wheel array, Guitaint, Venitian Glass Nephew, Peasant Instrument, Ultra Hodge, Appologetica, Aleatron

The whimsical names of the instruments played by Thus herein and the absence of descriptions of them in the liner notes make my job harder than usual, but so what? These guys are musical pataphysicians and are up to electronic jesterling of a fine sort and I'm not put out. Their tripod mind is suggested by three bowling balls, the schematic of their floor shows conceals more than it reveals and the musician in the photo on the back cover (uncredited, natch) is doing his best to look like a brown castoff of the Blue Man Group. It starts off more than okay, and three tracks in I'm intrigued, mesmerized even. These guys know their way around a Rube

Golbergian electronic array and the sounds emanating from it are surprise-ridden, alien-friendly and sometimes Partchian. A hotdang combo sound here. Sound for the weirdness of it, sound for the purpose of alienating the listener's expectations, sound for the kid-like joy of it. Some of the sounds will be familiar to *Improvisor* readers, many won't. I couldn't begin to say who is playing what. There none of the stop-and-start disconnected edginess peculiar to tons of free improve. Instead, all of the sounds above are part of a musical flow, a meaningful arc. This is a must-listen. Buy it and start enjoying it today in the comfort of your own rec room. It's way above the improve norm.

www.recorded.com

Richard Grooms

Stars Show the Way

Michael Bettine

percussion

Here are compositions and improvisations for solo percussion that bear favorable comparison with Evelyn Glennie's work. "Spiritual Resonance," dedicated to Pierre Favre, has a title that's not a surprise as Bettine's trancelike cymbal work here (and throughout the cd) owes more than a little to the great percussionist. More importantly, he shares a strong grasp of narrative that that master has. He doesn't so much sound like Favre as he has his sense of command and grace.

The whole of this outing is extremely well-recorded which is vital to this kind of thing. It's easily one of the best solo percussion records I've ever heard.

Bettine is essential listening for percussionists and anyone interested in solo free-oriented music.

Editions Intuitive Arts

drumsci@aol.com

Richard Grooms

Sandbox Trio

Urubamba

Martin Birke- octapad, perc., drums, keyboards

Chuck Ellis- lap steel gtr., fretless bass, thwackoleum, loops, tapes

Daniel Panasenکو- classical and prepared gtrs., pvc sax, elec. erhu, clay flute, perc.

Sort of group of improv tone-poems about the Urubamba river in South America, these pieces frequently shade into New Age music. When it's not patchouli wallpaper it's not bad at all; in fact, it can be very good indeed. It rises to this level about 25% of the time. Not a high rate, but if they could maintain it for a whole album I'd welcome it with open arms. And that raises a question: If you can do that level work, why bother with New Age? So *Echoes* will program it?

CD FMA 0414

Frank Mark Arts

www.frank-mark-arts.com

Richard Grooms

A Page Of Madness

Aono Jikken

William Satake Blauvelt (Khaen, Odaiko, Uchiwa-odaiko set, Gong, Bell Wheel, Taiko Set, Waterphone, Metal Duct, Afuche, Hioshige, Xylimba, Rainstick, Wind chime, Tympani, Bamboo, Chinese Opera Cymbals, Sound Toys, Chappa Rinbo, Frame Drum, Voice) Yoko Murao (Khaen, Rattles, Castanets, Bottle Drum, Toy Drum, Voice, Ratchet, Atarigame, Wood Knocker, Tibetan Bowl), Susie Kozawa (Khaen, Bell Wheel, Wood Knocker, Ratchet, 2X4 Wood Blocks, Sound Toys, Autoharp, Bass Baliphone, Bowed Cymbal, Kelp Trumpet, Voice.) Mike Shannon (Suruti Box, Harmonica, Bodhran, Rattles, Bells, Erhu, Kalimba, Beene, Zurna, Rhiata, Chin-chin, Chinese Opera gong, Voice, Dumbek, Dilruba, Kanjira, Bottillia, Bowed Bells,.) Esther Sugai

(Khaen, Uchiwa-Daiko Set, Harmonica, Fue, Flute, Kelp Oboe-sax, Voice, Kelp Clarinet, Rinbo, Kelp Trumpet)

Aono Jikken (pronounced Ah-Oh-No Gee-Ken), or **Blue Field Experiment**, is a sound/music/movement/multi-media ensemble based in Asian/American aesthetics and a structured improvisational performing style. (from the liner notes). What we have here is a soundtrack for Teinosuke Kinugasa's 1926 silent film 'A Page Of Madness'. To tell the truth, though I would've liked to've seen the film, I enjoy this CD on it's sonic merits alone. The instrumentation is unique, to say the least, and the music conjures many moods, ominous, silly, peaceful, raucus. As with any film music, there are often quite abrupt changes of style/sound/mood and this helps keep things interesting. There is definitely a narrative feel to the whole, though it doesn't come across as contrived or forced , as does much modern film music. This could just as easily be a disc of top-rate improvisors utilizing a huge assortment of sound-makers. Nor does it remind me at all of attempts by people from different cultures to blend their various cultural sounds. These people know what they're doing.

If you're ever in Seattle and catch wind of a showing of "A Page Of Madness" with a live score, I suggest you try to attend. This is one fascinating group. Oh yeah, the film sounds pretty swell too.

-jeph jerman

Gold Mountain Supply Company
William Satake Blauvelt
12043 17th Ave. N.E.
Seattle WA 98125
ph: 206 368 5645
e-mail: blauvelt@seattleu.edu

HANGMAN'S HILL

CD

***Peter Blegvad with John Greaves
& Chris Cutler***

Peter Blegvad, guitar, vox, clarinet
John Greaves, bass, keyboards **Chris Cutler**, drums
& a buncha' other folk

You'd havta' be SMOKIN' th' mirrors to make the music on this CD be considered as improv. Electric folk-rock, without doubt. For those who were enchanted by Dylan's first round with electric guitars, this will bring back distinctly fond memories. There are some riffs where (if you REALLY stretched yer' imagination) ya' might consider there was an element of jazz to it, but improvised it's not. That dinna' render it unlistenable for me, though... some great lyrics, creative arrangements, even a hint of the psychedelic... & a nice rawkin' beat most all th' way through. If ya' need some great road music, GET this - but if your bent is for "bent", move on down th' line.
Rotcod Zzaj

ReR Megacorp
79 Beulah Road
Thornton Heath
Surrey CR7 8 JG
UK

The Opium Wars

Cast: Jeff Webster (Manuel), Ed Araiza (Louie), K. Sanchez (Mariana), Lisa Vidal (Mariana), Ruth Maleczech (Amalia), Mary Shultz (Evelyn), Lola Pashalinshi (Dr. Stein)

Musicians: Ikue Mori (electric percussion), D.J. Olive (turntables), Tenko (voice), Margaret Parkins (cello), Zeena Parkins (sampler, electric harp), Joe Tramp (percussion), Chris Cochrane (guitar, voice), David Shea (turntables), D.D. Dorveillier (voice), Jonathan Bepler (voice)

The 17 pieces on this 71 minute audio CD present a radio play about ethnic life in Manhattan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Playright Ana Maria Simo uses poetry, ethnic vignettes, and argumentative dialogue to present the plight of a Cuban family that is destroyed by opium and the influx of Chinese immigrants. Music producer Zeena Parkins uses these artists and various musical sources to present a cacophonous musical soundtrack that reflects the turbulent lives of the characters in this play.

The music serves as background to the play and is heavily edited. It adds a powerful emotional subtext that amplifies what the characters in the play are going through emotionally. The music is mostly organized into short passages of the kind of experimental and extended technique music that you would come to expect from the downtown New York scene.

The actors deliver their lines very professionally and the writing is good. It is rare to hear a play that makes such extensive use of experimental writing techniques yet at the end you truly feel for the characters. It takes good actors to accomplish this. They show the emotions of desperate addicts quickly without making it appear to be campy or overly emotional. This is a radio play so everyone is close miked which lends itself to a feeling of intimacy with the characters as they interact with each other.

The artwork of the CD has a documentary motif. The J card features grainy, historical photos from the times and the CD itself has a line art image of a poppy (from which opium comes).

Overall, this CD has a nice theatrical experience to it. The combination of wild, "out-there" music and progressive, experimental theater yields a strong synergy in the hands of these excellent artists. Good work!

Glenn Engstrand

Voice Coil

Carrier Band

Pauline Oliveros- accordion with Expanded Instrument System

Peer Bode- live text with Bode Vocorder

Andrew Deutsch- live mixing, recordings, samples, loops, electronics

Stephen Vitiello- light meter recordings

If there was every a label that's consistently excellent it's Deep Listening. I've never heard a single cd of theirs that wasn't imaginative and challenging. *Voice Coil* is no exception. Like many records on the label it puts the listener in a rich, resonant aural space which is simultaneously restful and dizzying. The sort of space you'd want to dive into, swim around in, exult in. During the title track record you drift through ephemeral and etheric locations. You hear voices but you almost always can't tell what they're saying. Delicate but very strange electronics hover around. Oliveros' accordion streams all over, sometimes darting about. In addition to the title track there is "Frozen Speaker", an ionic bath for the ears and mind.

Deep Listening

DL 39-2008

www.deeplisting.org

Richard Grooms

Joy of a Toy

Eric Boeren Quartet

Okay, in the interest of full disclosure I must say that I may be prejudiced to liking this band primarily because one of the musicians play alto clarinet.

The musician's name is Michael Moor who also plays alto sax and Eb clarinet too. He is joined by Eric Boeren on cornet, Wilbert de Goode on Bass, and Han Bennink on drums.

Their music strikes me as playful compositions from four smart and talented people who understand the value of joy.

The original composers are Boeren and Ornette Coleman. The number of pieces are mostly split between these two but they included Gershwin's "Embraceable You."

Most of the thirteen pieces on this 57 minute CD were recorded in Amsterdam in early 1999. Uh, I know that this is going to sound strange but only ten of the pieces are numbered.

This is the calmest Han Bennink I believe that I have ever heard. I believe that normally he exhibits a most unique intensity in his playing. Even the liner notes refer to him as headstrong.

In the liner notes, Boeren, describes highlights of some of his experiences being in this band and gives two lessons, one at the beginning and one at the end. The first lesson is that bands need time to develop.

The second lesson is "some people still seem to think collective improvising is blowing with no regard to each other or to form. I think of it as creating and analyzing music at the same time."

-Glenn Engstrand

Bvhaast CD9907
Prinseneiland 99
1013 LN Amsterdam, Holland
<http://www.ejn.it/ag/bvhaast.htm>
wbk@xs4all.nl

Totem

Jerome Bourdellon-flutes, shakuhachi

Thomas Buckner-vocals

A sustained series of musically shamanic (I know it's an overused adjective, but there's just no other word) takes on the sculptures of Alan Kirili. Kirili's sculptures are, as the title of the record suggests, well, totemic. And like totems, they are capable of inspiring awe and wonder in the viewer, even the dismantling of the senses. Bourdellon's reeds and Buckner's voice make this liminal reality possible and they sometimes seem to break through the threshold of ordinary life and consciousness in their search for the

transcendent. I recommend, however, that you break for lunch or something halfway through. The liminal can be heavy-going at times. An astonishing testament.

Mutable

17526-2

Mutable Music

www.mutablemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Des Parasites Risquent de se Produire

Loren Boyer

(Loren Boyer documents his work circa 1997, 98 with the 8 tracks of this 34 minute CD.)

The music is throbbing and ominous, subterranean and seditious, Orwellian and Kantian. It is sleepwalking at noon with civil defense sirens going off all around you.

In short, this music is disturbing. The likely parasites are mental in nature.

I am not familiar with the artist.

The liner notes (written by Davey Williams and entitled "Spurious Adventures with Loren Boyer") alludes to his being a guitarist. I did not recognize any such instrument on this CD. Actually, the final track has something on it that sounds like a seriously detuned guitar.

He sounds like a sampling artist to me.

Perhaps he is more like an electric/electro acoustic artist. Maybe

this more like some kind of post-dub movement.

I heard no notes in the traditional sense here.

I do believe that this music is causing my cat to become confused and disoriented.

Good job!

-Glenn Engstrand

Intransitive
P.O. Box 391151
Cambridge, MA 02139
USA
<http://www.visionload.com/intransitive>
lab7787@garnet.acns.fsu.edu

tree sap for a heart

xibalba

augur

Steve Brand (flutes, gaitdrum, cat violin, electronics, tapes, ocarina, drums, bells, voice, etc)

Two improvised live to CD-R releases from a one man band of sorts. Lots of people exploit various technologies to build a sound machine around themselves these days, and I'm always interested to hear how each individual does it. Steve Brand's brand of solo music is multi-layered without ever quite becoming dense, yet retains a level of detail that rewards my return. These are rather quiet, intimate works, built around manipulation of simple instruments and sounds, though just what is making any particular sound is often a mystery. I like that, not knowing what a sound's source is. Is he repeating that phrase, or has it been captured by a delay? Is that a tape I hear, or has someone opened a window?

At times I am reminded of the work of Zoviet France, mostly because of the timbres of certain sounds. I also hear a resemblance to the work of Steve Peters, another soloist who manipulates sound sources live. There doesn't seem to be any emphasis on any single aspect or sound, though the violin keeps repeating throughout "tree sap..." and various loops return occasionally. Things flow from sound to sound, are altered, faded, re-introduced. A journey in sound.

"Xibalba" starts off with what could be a loop of a bit of a recording of some primitive music, fading up and down, overdriven to distortion....then maybe a lion's roar or perhaps it's a detuned string being scraped... Loops mutate, fight for dominance, and quiet, as the first sound is finally revealed to be a string instrument of somekind. A sort of backwards metamorphosis. I think what I like most about these discs is their emphasis on sound rather than idea. On feeling rather than intellect, which it sometimes seems is lacking in a lot of music these days.

jeph jerman

Steve Brand/augur
5627 Granada
Roeland Park KS 66205
www.shiney.com/augur
jsbrand7@aol.com

Misterioso

Automatismi

CMC

Massimo Rossi- alto and soprano sax

Rosella Cangini- voice

Frederico Marchesano- acoustic bass

Dario Bruna- percussion

A good and lively spin, this. Cangini is the focus here. Her vocals are flexible, highly supple, and spirited. It must be a blast to see this group live. Imagine Lambert, Hendricks and Ross distilled down to one voice able to throw itself into dizzying, fantastical whirls, accompanied by very nimble backing players. In particular, Rossi's saxes are strong throughout. The fact that I can't figure out the lyrics only added to my giddy listening experience. Take this in small chunks or you might get exhausted or dizzy. Hats off!

CMC

2003-2

e.maxrossi@libero.it

C.so Mazzini 32
10080 Rivara (TO) Italy

Richard Grooms

My Dear Siegfried

David Behrman

Behrman- keyboards, electronics

Thomas Buckner, Maria Ludovici, Eric Barsness- vocalists

Peter Zummo- trombone

Ralph Samuelson- shakuhachi

Tod Hamilton- engineering and special effects

WW1-era antiwar British poet Siegfried Sassoon and American S.N. Behrman exchanged spirited letters and poetry for many years. David Behrman (apparently no relation to S.N.), inspired by this correspondence, programmed his electronic musical devices to interact with vocalists reciting some of these texts. The results are uneven. Behrman's instrumental subtleties are as wonderful here as they have been throughout his career. He is one of the 20th century's most gifted electronic music-makers (There, I said it). But the pastoral gentleness coming from his machinery is not very compatible with the largely unmusical character of the recited texts. I think it would've been much more preferable to let the listener silently read the texts while listening to the music; the two aren't inherently mismatched. An exception is the piece "Everyone Sang," the ecstatic poem Sassoon wrote to commemorate the end of WW1. The electronics fit well with the words, and that's mostly because the poem here is sung, not spoken.

Disc 2 in this 2-cd set is more enjoyable. Five more newly-recorded pieces by the composer are here and are all outstanding. "QSRL" and "Viewfinder" are Behrman at his lovely best, the electronic devices issuing music ranging from the gentle to the transcendently lyrical. "Touch Tones" and "Pools of Phase Locked Loops" are far more beautiful than their hardware titles would suggest. To say that disc 2 is worth the cost of the whole set would be a great understatement. Followers of Behrman won't want to miss this set and newcomers should try the second disc first.

Totem

Jerome Bourdellon-flutes, shakuhachi

Thomas Buckner-vocals

A sustained series of musically shamanic (I know it's an overused adjective, but there's just no other word) takes on the sculptures of Alan Kirili. Kirili's sculptures are, as the title of the record suggests, well, totemic. And like totems, they are capable of inspiring awe and wonder in the viewer, even the dismantling of the senses. Bourdellon's reeds and Buckner's voice make this liminal reality possible and they sometimes seem to break through the threshold of ordinary life and consciousness in their search for the transcendent. I recommend, however, that you break for lunch or something halfway through. The liminal can be heavy-going at times. An astonishing testament.

Mutable

17526-2

Mutable Music

www.mutablemusic.com

Richard Grooms

The Animation Of Lists And The Archytan Transpositions

Warren Burt

Warren Burt- composer

Catherine Schieve- tuning forks

Don't let the title mystify or intimidate you-I don't get it either. Just be aware that this is a theatre wherein Burt's rough compositional outlines leave room for improvisation and randomness-and it's all played on tuning forks. Schieve's nimbleness on the forks (there are many types of them in her array) makes for a forest of surprising, wholly novel and almost always gentle sounds. The sounds seem to rise up vertically from the surface, and then fade away, to be replaced by new ones. Masterfully recorded for optimum clarity, detail and warmth, this is a document of remarkable sonic gorgeousness. Though the "pieces" are divided up into four parts in the liner notes there is no pause or significant change when one piece stops and another starts. In effect each cd in this 2-cd set is a "piece." Fans of Tibetan bells and overtones will be at least intrigued and probably delighted by this record as will anyone open to new horizons in the possibility of consonant sound.

Experimental Intermedia

XI 130

www.xirecords.org

Richard Grooms

Buddy Systems

Gino Robair- perc., theremin, etc.

Here Robair sallies trios and duets with a cast of ten others.

Rationality: Robair wants to stomp that sucker flat. He does that here in “Tangle” with John Butcher and Tim Perkins and in “Inappropriations” with Otomo Yoshihide. Heavy electronic skronking contained within. A dramatic switch is evident in “Black Scales”

which reveals an introspective side to Robair & Co. The first duet with violinist Ladonna Smith conjures up large buzzing insects involved in rituals known only to themselves, but these provide auditory pleasure to humans. Called “Mysterious Vision”, it earns the title in spades.

(Full disclosure: Smith is my editor/publisher). “Sklarking”, another one with Smith, also comes out of far left field and is also proudly weird. Yoshihide brings high-test strangeness

back toward the end of the album with his turntables and CD player arsenal.

Not all cuts provide interest on this outing, but the ones that hit home make it more than worth the listen or two.

Meniscus Records

3010 Hennepin Ave. South, Suite 217

Minneapolis, MN 55408

Richard Grooms

Dreaming Wide Awake

New Circle Five

Monique Buzzarte- trombone, didjeridu, conch

Rosi Hertlein- violin, voice

Susie Ibarra- percussion

Kristin Norderval- soprano sax

Pauline Oliveros- accordion

The Deep Listening label consistently pleases and this outing by the New Circle Five is no exception. The title is spot on. It's calming yet restive and occupies a territory hard to define.

I was looking at photos of bacteria and archaea while I was listening to this. They fit very well with the character of the music: mysterious, subtle, gentle, non-obtrusive, intangible and refreshingly alien. And yet, like those

microscopic creatures, the music here is a part of our unfamiliar world that is made vivid here.

Deep Listening

DL 20- 2003

www.deeplisting.org/dlc

Richard Grooms

Review of a visit to Toronto: Improv meeting at Victory Restaurant Tuesday Sept 5, 2000

Kurt Newman- solo guitar

From sparse introductions converging into interesting personal tonalities and languaging for guitar, electric frazzles transforming sound in a slow rise of intensity, cry baby gets a new meaning. Coaxing an expression dry and fragile as rare mosses (music) growing on a riverbank, speaking silently as the wilderness night sounds. From a hollow bodied electric, **Kurt Newman** coaxes a variety of sounds in hammering, stroking, rubbing, fingerings and placements, creating a contrapuntal deluge of simultaneous musical noise, harmonics, and sound events. One of the most interesting new stylists I've heard in a long time.

John Oswald-alto saxophone, Allison Cameron-assorted things, Mike Genera-drums

Splashes of percussion, understated saxophone, contact mics on enigmatic objects, and exploring the territory gradually. Genera was extremely interesting to watch. His actions were very alert almost like he was about to bust forth with energy, always poised for the

next attack. It was the point of poise that I found so captivating, although his accents and punctuation were varietal and well placed. Contrast that with the enormous understatement of Oswald and Cameron-- John with a tee shirt stuffed down the bell of the horn, Cameron leaning intently over the two boxes and processor, as she fiddled with a contact mic on the table, providing a subtle background of white noise. Layer that with Oswald's deceptive vocal feedback through the horn. The music reminded me of the biological level, elements of heat, atomic particles swarming around a center, a nucleus, noticably responsive and alive.

LaDonna Smith, yes, that was me, too tranced out to remember anything other than playing **solo viola**, and in trio with **Angelique von Berlo**-accordion and **John Oswald**-alto **saxophone** wrapping up the gig, in a sonority discussion that culminated in a rousing groove.

LS

DIVERTISSEMENT CD

Misterioso

Massimo Rossi, alto & saxophones, **Rosella Cangini**, voice **Carlo Actis Dolo**, baritone sax & bass clarinet **Federico Marchesano**, double bass & el. bass

A CD in from "centro musica creativo". Well, creative it most certainly IS! I particularly enjoyed the wierd combinations of voice & reeds performed by Rosella. This music is high-energy horn based pandemonium - but not the "screech & whistle" kind. Well formed sounds, complete interactions that form an enchanting mix that's hard to resist. Those with (any) difficulty understanding how light and shadow affect aural images may also find this more of a challenge than they can deal with, but those who thirst for talent unbounded will certainly thrive. These folks are clearly in love with freedom in music, improvising from the first bar to the last. I can (now) see why my friend Amy Denio loves Italia so much... on second thought, she PROBABLY had much to DO with this level of creativity occurring. In a sense, comparisons with her more poignant vocal works are certainly in order. In the overall, a fantastic musical experience that gives the listener an equal mix of each player's broad skill range. Gets a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from me.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Massimo Rossi
c.so Mazzini 32-10080
Rivara, Italy

Misterioso

Automatismi

CMC

Massimo Rossi- alto and soprano sax

Rosella Cangini- voice

Frederico Marchesano- acoustic bass

Dario Bruna- percussion

A good and lively spin, this. Cangini is the focus here. Her vocals are flexible, highly supple, and spirited. It must be a blast to see this group live. Imagine Lambert, Hendricks and Ross distilled down to one voice able to throw itself into dizzying, fantastical whirls, accompanied by very nimble backing players. In particular, Rossi's saxes are strong throughout. The fact that I can't figure out the lyrics only added to my giddy listening experience. Take this in small chunks or you might get exhausted or dizzy. Hats off!

CMC

2003-2

e.maxrossi@libero.it

C.so Mazzini 32
10080 Rivara (TO) Italy

Richard Grooms

String Quartets

Peter Garland- composer

Gordon Mackay and Hilary Sturt- violins

Bridget Carey- viola

Anton Lukoszevieze- cello

“String Quartet 1”: Kyle Gann is right when he says Garland’s music never quite resolves. But then if you hear how elegant and dignified it is, you’d see why it has to hang in the air. Plainly American yet shot through with Far Eastern stateliness and a meditative character. This description brings Lou Harrison to mind, but Garland is happily independent. The piece is beautifully stoical.

The “String Quartet 2” is a modernist lullaby, yearning for something but never grasping it. It would perfectly accompany staring out the window at rain. It’s not humdrum, however, and it’s clearly endearing.

Garland is someone worth paying attention to. This cd has made me emotionally richer.

Cold Blue

CB 0031

Ut Gret

Recent Fossils

with, Greg Acker, Joe Conroy, Steve Good, Gary Pahler, Joseph Getter, Mark Englert, Bob Douglas, Steve Roberts, David Stilley, Sam Gray, Keenan Lawler Tom Butsch, Misha Feigin, Andy Rademaker, Henry Kaiser, Davey Williams, Eugene Chadbourne, Greg Goodman, Doug Carrol, Dean Zigoris, Jay Lyons, Marko Novachcoff,

Paul Lovens, Todd Hildreth, Mark Bradlyn, Mike Heffley, Peter Hadley

This is a big kahuna for the Grets, maybe even a major opus, a 25th anniversary 3-cd set. They've always been good at pulling rabbits out of hats, but I never expected gamelan to be one of them. The whole first disc is a contemporary Indonesian/western gamelan piece made up of 18 sections which tend to get more Western toward the end before they end up more Javanese than anything. It's largely a pleasing, even challenging experience, both restful and energetic. Very seldom does it sound quite like anything I've heard before, and I've heard a great deal of gamelan. It has a bit of humdrum in tracks 16 and 17, but it almost continually surprised me, not a small feat.

Speaking of gamelan, there's a performance of "In C" by Terry Riley, that gamelan offspring, which takes up Disc 3. A smoothly chugging, sax-colored performance, it's a treat and a half.

Disc 3's "Time Lapse" gives some idea of what an improv-ready Lou Harrison might have been like with its pan-Asian slippery stateliness. "Foreplay" first camps up soundtrack miasma, but later unfortunately succumbs to the bog of it all. "Music To Die By," an elegiac marvel, could also make a good testament to being alive.

The Grets have done themselves proud here and this a good way to sample their eclecticism and daring.

Ear X-tacy records

EARXTC@aol.com

Richard Grooms

Peering Over

edgewalker experimental instruments consort

Doug Carroll (sonic ray), Ted Dutcher (techphonic plate), Glen Engstrand (north star), Jim Hearon (crustacean), Ed Herrmann (t-rodimba), Gary Knowlton (techphonic plate), Mihai Manoliu (bug), Lisa Moskow (11 trees), Vinny Nicastro (t-rodimba), Tom Nunn (bat), Randy Porter (bug), Garth Powell (beetle), Moe Staiano (techphonic plate 1, drums), Peter Valsamis (techphonic plate, drums), William Winant (crab).

This CD presents a performance by a large group utilizing instruments designed and built by Tom Nunn. Some of the pieces are written, or maybe directed, by different

members of the ensemble, while others are free improvisations. The liner notes state that the instruments are, for the most part, new to these players, which I feel lends a feeling of discovery to the music. The instruments in question are odd beasts indeed. Electro-acoustic Percussion Boards are plywood sheets with various soundmaking devices attached, which are struck, scraped, plucked, strummed, rubbed or bowed to produce mettalic timbres and voice-like sounds.

Space Plates are stainless steel sheets to which are welded lengths of bronze brazing rod, placed to facillitate two-handed bowing. The plates rest on inflated ballons in small buckets, giving the whole a very resonant sound. Balloon/Slap Drums are PVC pipes of various lengths, with either balloon or cardboard heads. Each set of drums has 26 different tube lengths.

The music itself is sometimes reminiscent of Harry Partch's music, or the metal sound sculptures of Harry Bertoia, with a myriad of pitches and timbres colliding. Some pieces are mostly percussion/rhythm based, and others are more ethereal. It all sounds quite human though, and quite coherent and organized for a bunch of people playing instruments they are not completely familiar with.

The recording is an 'open air[[job, capturing the sounds of the instruments in the room, and while it is clean and pleasant, I do wish that the individual voices of the instruments were clearer. It also would be great to have a few photos to gaze at while this completely original music is playing on my stereo, but I'm nitpicking. (If you're interested in Tom Nunn's creations, pick this up and then spring for a copy of the 'Gravichords, Whirlies and Pyrophones book and CD set put together by Bart Hopkins. It features a solo recording of Nunn, along with a clear photo of several instruments.)

-jeph jerman

**Ramp Records
Tom Nunn
3016 25th St.
San Francisco CA 94110**

Descansos, Past

Jim Fox

Barry Newton- double bass

Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick- cello

Jessica Catron- cello

Aniela Perry- cello

Rachel Arnold- cello

“Descanso” is Spanish for rest, peace and quiet and those words give a rough description of the music on this cd single. Newton’s strong, stately bass supports and departs from the able cellos, and the whole adds up to austere beauty. This platter does suggest a place of calm, but the emotions connected with lamentation, penitence and sorrow are also in play here. A fine record is the result.

Cold Blue

CB 0021

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Accidents With Nature

Harris Newman- gtr., lapsteel

Bruce Cawdron- perc., glockenspiel

For most of my life I’ve been enamored of the nuevo folk Takoma label that came out of the 60s. Newman takes that sound (especially the John Fahey element) with its blending of American folk and Middle Eastern harmonics and reshapes it. The instruments used are acoustic, but

Newman and Cawdron sometimes make them sound electronic, apparently with tape manipulation. It's all pretty Fahey-esque until "It's a Trap" introduces more idiosyncratic sound suggesting plaintive, prairie-like psychic landscapes. From here on, this is the shape of the album. Newman is with this cd still somewhat under Fahey's shadow, but a good two-thirds of the material here show him claiming a plot of land as his own- a darker, moodier, lonelier place than the Takoma boys have. It's worth your time.

Strange Attractors

SA H029

P.O. Box 13007

Portland, Oregon 97213-0007

www.strange.atractors.com

Richard Grooms

Serendipity

CHW-Trio

Hannes Clauss (drums)

Paul Hubweber (trombone)

Hainer Wormann (guitar)

Straight-ahead, well maybe not. Did I hear a quote from "Strangers In The Night"? I guess that means anything goes with these three. Spastic intro to quiet click and scrape

to trading threes, a bit of a riff, traded around. I like the drummer a lot. Very quick, nice sounding kit. They often slip into a conventional trio format, lead instrument with backing, but they're not exactly playing standards. Also a lot of "you do that, now I'll do this, now he'll do the other" playing. The longest track (30'37"), goes through quite a few permutations before ending in a more or less perfect place. Flirting with rhythm, but only for the briefest of moments, and the guitarist plays straight into his amp, using only his fingers to get those odd sounds. They do a bit of the quickquickquick, which I enjoy immensely.

-jeph jerman

Hybrid Music Prod.
ebelstr. 7
35392 Giessen
Germany

Young and Innocent Days

Swamp Room Records

Eugene Chadbourne- gtrs., etc.

Gregory Acker- tables, etc.

Todd Hildreth- organ, etc.

Andy Rademaker- bass

Steve Good- clarinet, etc.

Gary Pahler- drums

Dean Zigoris- mellotron, etc.

Chadbourne, some members of Ut Gret and others make an lp employing overly ambitious 10 year olds' concepts of psychedelia. That's just the starting point.

It's a roller coaster ahead and the kids-now-adults are well fueled for the ride. Then

they start driving the thing. I've never heard the Grets or Chad do conventional song

structures before. It's true alternative rock with a nod to Half Japanese.

Like them, it

celebrates amateurism and arrested development. It's all covers here:
Donovan, the Stones,
other sixties stars these guys grew up with. Mom and Dad have left the
den and the house
and the state and you and your young friends (kids, not adults?) realize
they're gone for days.
Then they're gone for your whole life but you're still 10. Then there's the
roller coaster yet to come. All of this on two see-thru psych-colored el
pees with artwork drawn by whacked middle schoolers. Limited to 1,000
copies. You couldn't produce this on a mass scale. Enjoy and bring
plenty of Kool-Aid. The rec room never had it so good.

Swamp Room Records
Auf Dem Loh 18
30167 Hannover

www.swamproom.de

Richard Grooms

Speechless

Fred Frith

Cuts 1-5:

Frith- gtr., violin, mellotron, bass, organ, voice

Guigou Chenevier- drums, tenor sax, voice

Margot Mathieu- soprano and tenor saxes, voice

Ferdinand Richard- bass, guimbarde, voice

Jo Thirion- organ, harmonium

Cuts 6-13:

Frith- gtr., violin, keybs., bass, drums, voice

Bill Laswell- bass

Fred Maher- drums

Not all that Eighties frenetic music has held up as this re-release shows. The first group here offers full-bore category Cuisinarting. Though it's sometimes delightfully energizing ("Kick the Can", "Carnival on Wall Street"), it can sometimes be eclectically show-offy ("Laughing Matter", "Woman Speak to Men") in a Zorn way. Too much of the second group is just plain enervating. Throughout, Frith is tremendous when he's lyrical but he provides frustratingly little of that here. The last two tracks are gems and prove that he's capable of small miracles. He's plain captivating when he's not trying to prove anything, not trying to multitask all the time.

For the Frith faithful only.

ReR/ FRO 04

www.fredfrith.com

Richard Grooms

"Double Jeu Trio featuring Michel Godard"

Francois Chevrolet: Alto Saxophone

Michel Godard: Tuba

Christian Graf: Guitar

Bernard Trontin: Percussion, samples

The idea of musical fusions has always seemed to have appeal to the composition-minded. There is something intellectually appealing about the experiment of welding different kinds of music into various sonic Rube Goldberg devices. However, it is less clear whether all of the musical greats, to whom the F-word is applied, actually set out

consciously toward this composer's goal. King Crimson, Captain Beefheart, Bill Frisell come to mind as creators of some timeless "fusions" (if we must) that somehow lack the self-consciousness of others in the same CD bin.

Although this CD is more rewarding than many other hybrids, I must report that it has a sizable helping of that self-consciousness that pervades fusion. The back story, according to liner notes, seems to be of a group of active individual Continental musicians who variously work in jazz, free jazz, classical avant-garde, rock, and so on. They bring these disparate influences to bear on the compositions of Francois Chevrolet, and the DJT is born.

Don't celebrate yet. The self-consciousness is mainly in the fact that the compositions are overly modular. They do not move through the different sections very smoothly, perhaps because the transitions tend to be quite awkward--now we do the funkier staccato stuff, now the more open "free" stuff, now the *mysterioso* atonal heads, and so on. While this approach makes for a listening experience on the seat's edge, what it *does not* do is reward repeated listenings. By the middle of the second listen to the disc, my mind completely wandered, and I found some of the patchwork quality annoying.

The compositions themselves are most analogous to much of the early- to mid-eighties music from New York's Downtown scene. The tuba and the lilting minor and atonal lines make a comparison to Bobby Previte's work tough to avoid. The more energetic stuff, and the inclusion of a guitar share qualities with Wayne Horvitz' President, although Graf tends to sound more like Joe Baiza of Universal Congress Of than Bill Frisell.

One problem of most of the compositions is that the main themes are often played by the guitar and alto in unison. Chevrolet has a dark, restrained approach as it is--closer to Paul Desmond than John Zorn--and so most of the lines have this thin, pinched quality that weakens them. This seems to add to the sense of hesitancy and self-consciousness.

I do not want to leave the impression that this CD is worse than it is. The musicians here are all very competent, and as I implied above, the first listening of the disc kept me wondering whether something great was just a few bars away. As is often the case with fusion, this stuff might have been geared to expanding the gigging possibilities of the musician. It would be offensive neither in rock clubs nor jazz clubs, and make for a decent evening out in either venue. Trouble is, that's just not good enough to guarantee that the audience members will ever want to see them *again*.

-Wyman Brantley

contact: Francois Chevrolet
16, 16, av. Jules Crosnier
CH-1206 Geneve
www.fusions.ch/doublejeu

Limn

Nakatani Chen Duo

Tatsuya Nakatani-percussion

Audrey Chen-cello, voice

Susan Alcorn-pedal steel guitar

If it's dramatic sweep you want this is a more than fine place to start. Chen is one of the leading practitioners of extended vocal techniques, if this album is representative. She can convey wonder, pain, mystery and so much else it'd take a small encyclopedia to describe it all. Nakatani's a highly sensitive partner and commands a panoply of percussion devices with utmost effectiveness and imagination. Some of the tracks here were recorded live in various Southern cities in 2005. Wish they'd come to Birmingham, but there's always the future, innit? Meanwhile, the chthonic reigns on this disc. That's not an unusual thing for a free improv group to pull off, but this duo/trio do it as well as anyone, and of course Alcorn is a wonder-worker.

www.hhproductions.org

HH-6

Richard Grooms

Quartet Solo Series

Marina Peterson

Phillip Schultz

Jonathan Chen

Andrew DeWar

Four very extreme solo pieces, and they're evaluated below:

Marina Peterson / athens.s / for cello, paper clips, sticks

Peterson effectively gets you to focus on small details, tiny things, the possibilities of the very small. Floorboards creaking, doors opening and similar mundane things are transformed into much more than just random, uninteresting sound.

Phillip Schulze / Cause Unfold Proceed II / for electronics

This sortie comes across like a machine trying to communicate with humans. We can't understand it, but the effort the machine put into it was interesting and more than welcome. That machine probably has a rich life of its own when we're not hanging around.

Jonathan Chen / Drummer / for electronics

Basically one ongoing, virtually unchanging drone. Sound this limited pretty much made me feel like an irrelevant party. If La Monte Young's 60s group's drones were too maximal for you, you may latch onto this in a big way.

Andrew Dewar / Diptych / for soprano sax

A worthy entry in the genre where a sax is conceived of as a piece of metal capable of making sounds that don't sound recognizably saxophone-like at all.

Striking Mechanism

SM 0001

Richard Grooms

Sonic Calligraphy

Peggy Chew- vocals

Adrian Frey- piano

Chew and Frey combine traditional American jazz, Latin jazz, and traditional Chinese songs for a generally spirited and buoyant session. At times the improvising is too conventional and safe (this is more true of Frey than Chew- Frey's playing occasionally shows evidence of supper club jazz) but there's much more success here than dross. If the idea of these crosscurrents appeals to you, by all means give this a listen. When it clicks, it does so beautifully.

Altisuoni

www.altisuoni.com

Richard Grooms

Clit Stop - Many different bands

After many different venues and the police closing down clubs, the community who enjoys brutal sound effects or noise found a home when Betty Bunoerro and Tina Royce began The Clit Stop. Based in San Francisco, the lesbian community supported the first show because they could not resist the name. They were totally unprepared because no one told them the music (?) was unlistenable. After a year of compiling material from many different bands, this release contains approximately 1/8th of the music played.

If you enjoy NOISE, then you will like this release. I listened to the entire CD and I think I heard a good little groove in song #8.

My enjoyment, had I been at the first show, would have been observing the audience and how they reacted throughout the night. That would have been so much more entertaining than anything I heard on this release - and I really tried! - Robin Taylor

ClitStop, 557 Howard Street 2nd Floor, San Francisco, California 94105; phone 415.896.6434; e-mail - clitstop@farts.com.

Midheaven c/o Revolver USA Distribution, 2525 16th Street, 3rd Floor, San Francisco, California 94103 USA, attn: Aaron; e-mail - order@midheaven.com; phone 415.241.2437; fax 415.241.2421.

[Adams/Cox/Fink/Fox](#)

Marty Walker- clarinet, bass clarinet

Amy Knoles- vibes and marimba

Bryan Pezzone- piano

Maria Newman and Peter Kent- violins

Valerie Dimond- viola

Here are compositions by the composers in the title above-John Luther Adams, Rick Cox, Michael Jon Fink and Jim Fox-and brief interludes by Marty Walker. “Dark Wind”, the lead piece by Adams, is altogether too static and somber for me, the first time this composer hasn’t dazzled me. Fink’s “Thread of Summer” is an articulate, contemplative work that puts forth a rich autumnal half-light. Cox’s piece doesn’t stand out from tenure-oriented academic composition. He is, like Adams, capable of very much more. Fox’s gentle “Between the Wheels” shows that strings can create a hovering, birdlike atmosphere. It would have benefited from being a little shorter, but it’s a success.

[Cold Blue Music](#)

[CB 0009](#)

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Complete 10-Inch Series From Cold Blue

Various Artists

Cold Blue is a label started in the 80s, revived in the 90s and still percolating today. They've featured West Coast composers and have pioneered post-minimalist, ambient and process music. Much of the music on the label can be seen as a reaction against 70s-80s East Coast compositional over-complexity, atonalism and over-seriousness. For me at least, this is a blessing for my ears. This set is a re-release of the 10-inch vinyl records the label put out in the early 80's.

Peter Garland's "Matachin Dances" sway back and forth like medieval troubadour dance music that's only barely found its way into the twentieth century. Barely, but unmistakably. Their historic depth partly comes from the fact that they're inspired by Mexican matachine folk dance music which date back as much as 470 years ago. They are refreshing and engaging.

Michael Jon Fink's piano pieces are minimalist in the sense that everything's pared down to only the barest of dramatic essentials. They almost fade into nothingness but make their presence known with the subtlest means of impact, the way a Zen patriarch might make a hand gesture.

Barney Childs' "Clay Music" is the highlight of the set. His piece gives structure to a group of players apparently improvising (at least it sounds like improvising) with Susan Rawcliffe's personally-designed collection of flutes, whistles and ocarinas. Traditional Andean wind music made contemporary might describe this. Rawcliffe's unique designs open up possibilities as they have on her other albums, and Childs' framework brings a new type of clarity to the sounds they can make in the right hands, and they're in the right hands here. It's vividly present and yet somehow mysterious.

Chas Smith's pieces for pedal steel guitar and 12-string dobro so transform those instruments that they're mostly unrecognizable. The

twang of the pedal steel is distilled down into a wide open spaces ambient prairie sound. “Scicura” offers gentle, web-like sound linkages which are arrestingly beguiling.

Rick Cox on prepared guitar and Marty Walker on clarinet illustrate two Cox compositions of not-quite-ambient music that make for a comforting weirdness. If I hadn’t seen the mention of prepared guitar in the notes, I wouldn’t have believed it. Caressing sounds come out of his axe, but they’re smudged in a forlornly gorgeous way. I can’t really tell that it’s a clarinet most of the time, either, but it’s similarly beautiful and Walker dovetails well with Cox.

Daniel Lentz’s crystalline steady-state works wrap up this set. A reproduction of the cover of the original 10-inch is in the booklet and shows a crescent moon shape within a silhouette of the sun’s surface flames. The crescent is suggestive of a smile but only suggestive. And the sun burns on. These images illustrate Lent’s music, with its deceptive brightness and spiraling steadiness. He only sounds too pretty if you’re not paying close attention.

CB 0014

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Marty Walker

Dancing on Water

Walker-clarinet, bass clarinet

Ten compositions from various composers highlighting Walker's clarinet playing. Daniel Lentz's "Songs of the Sirens" more than lives up to its title. I've enjoyed this piece for over 20 years on the Montagnana Trio's old lp and this version is every bit the equal of that one. This seductive and erotic work might make Ulysses reconsider and embrace the sirens. This alone is worth the price of admission. It's involved enough for academic study, pleasant enough for salon music. Thank goodness Lentz has avoided the retentiveness of so many contemporary classical composers. The Fox and Fink pieces are drier and less daring than their usual output. I prefer their mystical approach more. I can't get excited about the Rick Cox pieces either, but his work in ensembles is not to be missed. So the cd here is saved by the bell, or by the Lentz.

Cold Blue

CB 0005

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Groom

Descansos, Past

Jim Fox

Barry Newton- double bass

Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick- cello

Jessica Catron- cello

Aniela Perry- cello

Rachel Arnold- cello

“Descanso” is Spanish for rest, peace and quiet and those words give a rough description of the music on this cd single. Newton’s strong, stately bass supports and departs from the able cellos, and the whole adds up to austere beauty. This platter does suggest a place of calm, but the emotions connected with lamentation, penitence and sorrow are also in play here. A fine record is the result.

Cold Blue

CB 0021

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Chas Smith

Descent

Smith- stainless steel sheet, pedal steel gtr., flutes, zither, Copper Box, tapes, etc.

The line-up of instruments above gives only the vaguest notion of what this recording sounds like. There are three tracks here, averaging about sixteen minutes each. Suffice it to say they probably sound like nothing you’ve ever heard before, certain like nothing I’ve heard before, not even the other cd’s under Smith’s name. “Descent” is music/sound suggestive of continental drift (it’s that slow). And it’s that... is “grand” the word? It suggests eons. The aura it gives off is like heat shimmering. Its sense of space makes me think of large desert expanses. “Endless Mardi Gras” is hardly festive. The title’s meant ironically, however. It points out the anti-celebratory, anti-development (at least development in the conventional sense) nature of this extremely slow and very dour soundwork. Anything like this risks serious ennui and it overruns its welcome somewhat at just over twenty minutes. But I’d listen to it again for its generous strangeness. The last cut, “False Clarity” fortunately returns to the evocative drift of “Descent”. It recalls the marvelous bowed piano music of Stephen Scott, but the character here is both tougher and more overtly graceful. It allows itself to revel in the luxuriousness of gradual development.

Cold Blue

CB 0023

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Fade

Rick Cox

Rick Cox-electric guitar

Thomas Freeman - bass, signal processors

If ECM is “the most beautiful sound next to silence” then Cold Blue, which has ECM DNA (but which isn’t jazz and not quite ECM New Series) is maybe the most austere sound next to silence. This cd single by Cox starts with floating, enshrouding electronics that almost makes you feel as if you’re leaving this world behind. That isn’t necessarily a good feeling but it’s certainly an intriguing one. One thinks of Tibetan bardo, exile-even death-but none of those states quite gets at what’s happening here. Think of Eno’s 70’s and 80’s slow-moving bits but think more substance and richness. If this sounds snooze-worthy, it’s not by a long shot. Actually, it’s oddly comforting, a place where the worst has already happened and a resounding calm has set in. I recommend it without hesitation.

Cold Blue

CB 0020

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Jim Fox

Last Things

Track 1- Copy of the Drawing

Janyce Collins- voice

Jim Fox- electronics

Two strong pieces make up this cd. In “Drawing”, dream-shaped, almost formless musical clouds drift about in loose structures. Sketchy skeins of electronics add much to the color. Fox repeats semi-regular electronic figures which sound like the bass end of the inside of a piano. Collins whisper-recites (in a voice not unlike Laurie Anderson) excerpts from letters written to a Mr. Wilson, the proprietor of the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles. Wilson was a first-class eccentric and trickster. You can only hear parts of the spoken texts here, excerpts of excerpts. No text is provided, which only highlights the hallucinatory character of the piece. In effect it’s here for atmosphere since you can’t pick out what’s being said most of the time. The words are then natural companions to the instrumental musical clouds. The whole thing is somewhat like David Behrman’s gentle electronic works, sounding half-composed, half-improvised, but even more formless and unanchored. It’s haunting, very beautiful and-perhaps inevitably-fugitive.

Track 2- Last Things

Marty Walker- bass clarinet

Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Rick Cox- glass gtr.

Jim Fox- piano, electronic keyboards

Below registers: strong repetitive rumblings from the bass end of a piano. Above: Mournful lines from the bass clarinet seem to come from an unknowable ceremony. Middle range: pedal steel, electronics and glass guitars (whatever they are). A very resonant result comes out of all this. It sounds like something outside our world and time. The last few minutes build to a crescendo which only underscores the lamentation nature of the piece. A solid performance, restful and edgy.

Cold Blue

CB 0001

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Rick Cox

Maria Falling Away

Rick Cox- elec. guitar, prepared elec. guitar, baritone elec. guitar,
alto sax, contra-alto clarinet, sampler

Guest artists (each on one track only):

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Thomas Newman- piano

Jeff Elmassion- clarinet

Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Here are six compositions (with some apparent improv) by Cox and others in duet format. On unusual occasions the Cold Blue esthetic can lapse into blandness, and the first three pieces here wouldn't be out of place on Music from the Hearts of Space.

Which is a disappointment, knowing how much more Cox is usually capable of. 13 minutes into “The Years in Streams” and I was still waiting for it to take off. There’s a lot of tapioca-like material here that just seems unending. This cd takes no risks (and risk is something Cold Blue excels at) and is almost unremittingly boring. But don’t let it deter you from other Cox cd’s which are vastly better than this one.

Cold Blue

CB 0006

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

On The Leopard Altar

Daniel Lentz

Voices-Jessica Lowe, Paul Mackey, Susan James, Dennis Parnell

Keyboards-Brad Ellis, David Kuehn, Arlene Dunlap, Lentz

Wineglasses-Ellis, Kuehn, Dunlap, Lowe, James

This record came out first in 1984 on Icon records then quickly went out of print to my dismay. It got good notices then and I have to say it was well worth the wait. Five early compositions by Lentz are here. In “Is It Love?” the voices chant texts in hypnotic, subtractive patterns. It makes you think of early Glass only it’s more informal and hotwired. “Lascaux” for wineglass ensemble makes sound wave reverberation a positive virtue. Lentz is the champion and master of the under-appreciated wineglass. Here, as in so much of his career, he fully embraces beauty, which is almost as reckless today as it was in 1984. That’s other folks’ loss. The work is as gorgeous as all get-out, so bleak modernists were being given notice. “On The Leopard Altar” is mesmerizingly attractive, even lush, and the ensemble here, as on every track on this record, performs excellently. The voices are partly Glassian, but much more erotic than anything the sober Glass was coming up with. “Wolf Is Dead” has plenty of repetitive playfulness and is very light on its feet. “Requiem” takes words

from a Latin Mass and might be the soundtrack for a Catholic David Lynch movie. This is one of the very best Cold Blues. Enthusiastically recommended.

Cold Blue

CB 0022

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Torque

Brian Groder

Groder- trumpet, flugelhorn

Sam Rivers- flute, saxes

Doug Mathews- bass

Anthony Cole- drums

Very good if not mind-blowing modernistic jazz. Not really anything that couldn't have been done 40 years ago, so it's maybe best to say it's modern-classical jazz. Groder is quite good, Mathews and Cole never lost touch, but it's Rivers who shines the most here even though he's not in the spotlight as much. Those like me who feel that mainstream jazz is in a rut may not be overwhelmed, but those who don't have that view will probably be very impressed indeed. In any case, Rivers is always worth listening to.

Latham Records

LATHAM 5106-2

Richard Grooms

Heritage and Ringtones

Martin Archer

Archer- reeds, keyboards, vioelectronics, processing, drum programs

Ingar Zach- perc.

Rhodri Davies- harp

Simon Fell- double bass

Julie Cole- voice

Tim Cole- acoustic gtr.

Masayo Asahara- processing

Archer combines electronics and acoustics, live playing and tapes, but most importantly, he blends harmony and disharmony, and does this in ways that are complimentary, unexpected and original. And on a few cuts he combines his love for English traditional folk music with free playing. I enjoy both these categories, but have never heard them Cuisinarted. They work blended as well as in tandem on this disc. Grace and rattling, taste and junk, convention and radical culture- all of these are here, and they judiciously balance each other out. Archer & Co. have good ears and good sense, which come together not often enough in the musical world. An unexpected treat.

Discus

Discus 18 CD

www.discus-music.co.uk

Richard Grooms

Winter Pilgrim Arriving

**Martin Archer (sonic dp, sythesizers, sopranino sax, Bflat and Bass clarinets, consort of recorders, violectronics),
Derek Saw (cornet),
Simon H. Fell (double bass),
Tim Cole (acoustic guitar),
Charlie Collins (flute, sampling),
Gino Robair (percussion),
James Archer (amplified Objects),
Mick Beck (bassoon),
Sedayne (crwth).**

This CD is comprised of compositions built up in the studio from improvisations, which are added to, manipulated or otherwise transformed by their settings. In the notes accompanying the disc, Archer speaks of music from a certain period, the late sixties/early seventies work of the Canterbury school of progressive rock, and the concomittant folk-rock sounds that were coming out of England during the same period, and how it conjured for him the feeling that music could be/ do anything. These compositions give me a similar feeling, but they sound completely modern. Unlike a lot of other constructions of this type that I've heard, the patchwork and various graftings don't come across as such. This music sounds like it all happened live, made by an army of sympatico musicians with an arsenal of equipment and a communal working approach. The sounds themselves are often quite disperate, but they are put together in such a way as to make them WORK magically. I'm impressed as hell by these little assemblages, and each time I listen, the amount of detail unfolds in a new way for me.

In the same set of notes, (a press release actually), Archer sadly admits that this may be the last disc from his label, due to a lack of commercial viability. He brings up the point that there seem to be far more people making "out" music these days than buying

it, and while I'm sorry that his label may produce no further examples of his work, I'm hopeful that the sheer numbers of people investigating sound may usher in a period of renewed importance in listening as a past-time. Maybe someday soon we could all learn to make sounds together as an everyday thing, and get away from the idea of sound as a commodity. Hmmm.

Jeph Jerman

**Discus
PO Box 658
Sheffield S10 3YR
England**

www.discus.mcmail.com

Scala

The Navigators

Beatrix Ward-Fernandez- violin, theremin, wood

Charles Collins- vibraphone, lamellophones, metal

John Jasnach- 12-string gtr., ud, ukulele, frame drum

The trebly nature of this unusual combination of instruments, added to the childlike exploratory nature of the performers, makes for a fresh, off-center and very engaging take on free music. Very enjoyable and recommended to those who don't think improv should be sturm und drang all the time.

Found Property Records

007

www.foundpropertyrecordings.com

Richard Grooms

Jim Fox

Last Things

Track 1- Copy of the Drawing

Janyce Collins- voice

Jim Fox- electronics

Two strong pieces make up this cd. In “Drawing”, dream-shaped, almost formless musical clouds drift about in loose structures. Sketchy skeins of electronics add much to the color. Fox repeats semi-regular electronic figures which sound like the bass end of the inside of a piano. Collins whisper-recites (in a voice not unlike Laurie Anderson) excerpts from letters written to a Mr. Wilson, the proprietor of the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles. Wilson was a first-class eccentric and trickster. You can only hear parts of the spoken texts here, excerpts of excerpts. No text is provided, which only highlights the hallucinatory character of the piece. In effect it’s here for atmosphere since you can’t pick out what’s being said most of the time. The words are then natural companions to the instrumental musical clouds. The whole thing is somewhat like David Behrman’s gentle electronic works, sounding half-composed, half-improvised, but even more formless and unanchored. It’s haunting, very beautiful and-perhaps inevitably-fugitive.

Track 2- Last Things

Marty Walker- bass clarinet

Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Rick Cox- glass gtr.

Jim Fox- piano, electronic keyboards

Below registers: strong repetitive rumblings from the bass end of a piano. Above: Mournful lines from the bass clarinet seem to come from an unknowable ceremony. Middle range: pedal steel, electronics and glass guitars (whatever they are). A very resonant result comes out of all this. It sounds like something outside our world and time. The last few minutes build to a crescendo which only underscores the lamentation nature of the piece. A solid performance, restful and edgy.

Cold Blue

CB 0001

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

...quartet '98, trio '97...

Kagel

**James Wood (amplified small sounds, select metals, objects, radio, electronics),
Mark Collins (acoustic bass, objects),
Douglas Theriault (tabletop guitar, objects, tape, cracked electronics),
Matthew Sperry (acoustic bass, objects).**

These guys are quick. Using mostly extended techniques, or invented instruments and fast reflexes Kagel create an updated version of the "fill in all the gaps with tiny details" style of improv. Individual events, created from myriad small parts, sit like islands in an archipelago of sound. A string of surprises, and the only way I know how a lot of these sounds are made is because I've see these boys play live. Their music could be described as a bridge between improvised sound and musique concret, but why force 'em into a box? Even if it is a lonely receptacle...I know of others doing similar things with sound, but not with the finesse and respect and, well, big ears displayed herein. If you're a fan of noise, of the old quickquick British improv, of musique concret or of just plain sensitive listeners playing as a GROUP, get this disc. 'Nuff said. And by the way, I know there are an awful lot of sound makers in the Pacific Northwest who play their respective asses off. When is someone going to get around to documenting all the hot shit coming outta Seattle and Portland?

jeph jerman

**Douglas Theriault
9034 N. Edison St.
Portland OR 97203
dtheriault@onemain.com**

Great Sunset

William Hooker (drums,poetry),

Mark Hennen (piano),

Lewis Barnes(trumpet),

Charles Compo (tenor and baritone sax, flute),

Richard Keene (soprano and tenor sax, flute).

A short horn fanfare opens the first piece, Hooker exclaims "Yeah!" The horns repeat and then we're into a drums piano dialogue of frenetic energy. Horns re-enter to play more little riffs, and then queue up for solos., with Hooker inserting vocalisms, and occasional words, along the way. Reminds me of many records in my collection, and if I don't remind myself periodically who it is I'm listening to, I fall into believing it's some long lost 1960's New York session. Better sound quality perhaps, but the spirit is there.

The press material that accompanied this cd states that "this release emphasizes William Hooker's compositions within a jazz ensemble format", and I can hear a difference between this recording and his other work that I've heard. A little more cohesiveness, a little more of a BAND ambience,(the photograph of Hooker on the back of the CD hides his face), and what the ensemble lacks in "tightness," they seem to make up for in feel.

The cd is broken up into individual tracks, but it's really one thirty-eight minute suite. I love long-form compositions and I love Free Jazz. And, while I'm not a big Hooker fan, I do love this CD.

-jeph jerman

Warm-O-Brisk
P.O.Box 3491
Newport R.I. 02840

Jeff Kaiser Ockodektet

Kaiser/Diaz-Infante Sextet

Kaiser-trumpet, flugelhorn

Diaz-Infante- prepared acoustic gtr.

Scot Ray- trombone

Jim Connolly- bass

Brad Dutz- perc.

Richie West- drums

The first 30-40 minutes of this cd is as instrumentally challenging and enjoyable as any of the Kaiser forays I've heard. But the text of this "Alchemical Mass" veers into pretension and embarrassment, a normal byproduct of reviving dead religions. All the more reason to sink your teeth into the sextet's very sharp session which follows the Mass. It's nervous, jittery, highly intense and breathtakingly buoyant. It's what you expect from Kaiser & Co. They can also be unsettling and spacious as on "Part 5". So just tune out the Latin during the Mass (easy for older Roman Catholics) and enjoy the non-vocal parts of this recording.

pfMentum

P.O. Box 1653

Ventura, Calif 93002

www.pfmentum.com

Jim Connolly and the Gove County String Quartet

Jim Connolly-contrabass

Sally Barr-violin

Kirsten Monke-violola

Laura Hackstein-violin

I wasn't that thrilled with the last Connolly project I reviewed (*Time Stops to Visit*) but I thought it had scads of promise. This outing goes a long way to fulfilling that promise. Fin de siecle Americana gets modern and cinematic on this record, a somewhat Kronos Quartet postmodernism crossed with quite a few strands from the homegrown warehouse: hymns, jazz, silent movie soundtracks, folk, Ben Johnston, and Dvorak's new world. It's a clear and powerful success. This group has helped Connolly to create a new type of American composition. Three, four, five cheers!

pfMENTUM

PFMCD 044

www.pfmentum.com

Richard Grooms

Time Stops To Visit

Jim Connolly and the Gove County Philharmonic

Short composed/improvised compositions, some of which could be brilliant soundtracks for short films that come out of the Fellini/Rota tradition. Partisans of Tin Hat Trio will find much to welcome here. Since I'm on the fence about Tin Hat, I'm swayed by Gove County's stuff about half the time. It conveys the romance and loss of Rota's music but sometimes takes it back with the other hand.

pfMENTUM

CD 009

<pfmentum.com>

Richard Grooms

Ut Gret

Recent Fossils

with, Greg Acker, Joe Conroy, Steve Good, Gary Pahler, Joseph Getter, Mark Englert, Bob Douglas, Steve Roberts, David Stilley, Sam Gray, Keenan Lawler Tom Butsch, Misha Feigin, Andy Rademaker, Henry Kaiser, Davey Williams, Eugene Chadbourne, Greg Goodman, Doug Carrol, Dean Zigoris, Jay Lyons, Marko Novachcoff, Paul Lovens, Todd Hildreth, Mark Bradlyn, Mike Heffley, Peter Hadley

This is a big kahuna for the Grets, maybe even a major opus, a 25th anniversary 3-cd set. They've always been good at pulling rabbits out of hats,

but I never expected gamelan to be one of them. The whole first disc is a contemporary Indonesian/western gamelan piece made up of 18 sections which tend to get more Western toward the end before they end up more Javanese than anything. It's largely a pleasing, even challenging experience, both restful and energetic. Very seldom does it sound quite like anything I've heard before, and I've heard a great deal of gamelan. It has a bit of humdrum in tracks 16 and 17, but it almost continually surprised me, not a small feat.

Speaking of gamelan, there's a performance of "In C" by Terry Riley, that gamelan offspring, which takes up Disc 3. A smoothly chugging, sax-colored performance, it's a treat and a half.

Disc 3's "Time Lapse" gives some idea of what an improv-ready Lou Harrison might have been like with its pan-Asian slippery stateliness. "Foreplay" first camps up soundtrack miasma, but later unfortunately succumbs to the bog of it all. "Music To Die By," an elegiac marvel, could also make a good testament to being alive.

The Grets have done themselves proud here and this a good way to sample their eclecticism and daring.

Ear X-tacy records

EARXTC@aol.com

Richard Grooms

Time Of The Grets

UT GRET

Joe Conroy (guitars, chapman stick, violin, bass, viol de gamba, santoor, psaltry, autoharp, cheng, shamisen, pipa, zitherphonics),

David Stilley (Saxophones, keyboards, bassoon, clarinets, flutes, wind synthesizer, percussion, midi mapping), Gregory Acker (flute, chendra, percussion),

Dave Williams (electric guitar), Eugene Chadbourne (guitar),

Murray Reams (drums),

Henry Kaiser (guitars),

Greg Goodman (piano),

Misha Feigin (voice, text)

Whew, quite a line-up. This is my first hearing of these gentlemen, after hearing

ABOUT them for many years. This CD runs the gamut of improvisational types. The first piece is all riffy and intricate with a great (gret) solo from Davey Williams. Sounds like some of it was composed, or at least constructed in the studio. The next bit has jazzy-bluesy-diddley-diddley picking from Chadbourne and skittery drums from Reams, with walking bass and blat/skreet contrabass clarinet from Conroy and Stilley. More completely freeform I'll guess.

The remainder of the disc flits and flirts with many different styles for different pieces and sometimes even within a single piece. i was constantly surprised and delighted by the changes and additions of texture/sound, helped, I'm sure, by the rotating cast of players, but it also seems to be these guys modus operandi. A liner note says: ³Zitherphonics is an approach/technique of playing several string instruments simultaneously to invent an orchestra.² I have to wonder what Joe Conroy sounds like playing solo.

Nice packaging, with plenty of photos and tongue-in cheek notes, along with an unnamed bonus track, make for enjoyable extras. I will definitely keep my ears open for more work from Ut Gret, and if you're a fan of many musics, i suggest you do the same.

-jeph jerman

ZNR Records
P.O.Box 58040
Louisville KY 40268-0040
(502) 933-7078
Fax: (502) 935-8656
e-mail: ZNR@AOL.COM

Eric Zinman Ensemble

- **Eric Zinman** **piano**
- **John Voigt** **bass**
- **Laurence Cook** **drums**

TRANSLATION FROM REVIEW: (www.badalchemistry.de)

" Within the **eric zinman ensemble**, Zinman presents himself, a pianist from Boston, born 1960, who in optical means fullfills together with the bassplayer, John Voigt and drummer, Laurence Cook, all the cliché imagination that one could make of the cloverleaf from a Jewish, an Italien, and an Irish gangster. Musically, however, Zinman follows, as inspired by Bill Dixon, the stoney path of a creativity far beyond any clichés. significant the coverversions that the ensemble spices up its inventions with , "Eventually" of Ornette Coleman, "Small Beggar" of the Boston-pianist Lowell Davidson (1941-1990), to who Coleman helped for an ESP-recording, that almost made it into the Wire-kult-list: '100 records that set the world on fire (while no one was listening)', and "straight up straight out" from saxplayer Glenn Sdpearman (1947-1998), Zinman's former roommate, who with

this complex piece of cacophony (in German: cats music) calls back upon the lower eastside's cats the Zinman ensemble is made of three spicey (zippy? or splashy, if this word exists) tachists, courage to abstraction, and of not little sophistication, all things that are not a bit to be suspected, nor by the daubed cover nor by the visages of the musicians."

Tachism by the way was a style of French painters of the 1950s, part of Informel, similar to Pollock, from french word la tache = spot, stain, dot, patch etc. Give my regards to the translator. I know that my mannerisms are sometimes hard to understand and even harder to translate.

with best alchemystic greetings

Bad Alchemy #52
Rigobert Dittmann
Franz-Ludwig-Str.11
97072 Würzburg

translated by Mario Rechartun

Artists web site and e-mail: www.ericzinman.com / www.ericzinman.com

Produced by Bob Rusch /Cadence/North Country Distributor
Cadence Building, Redwood, New York 13679, USA
Tel: +1 315-287-2852 :: Fax: +1 315-287-2860

The Psyche

The Revolutionary Ensemble

Leroy Jenkins- violin, viola

Sirone- bass

Jerome Cooper- drums, piano

The Psyche

The Revolutionary Ensemble

Leroy Jenkins- violin, viola

Sirone- bass

Jerome Cooper- drums, piano

A 2002 reissue of an obscure 1975 LP that came to my notice in our review hopper in 2007.

Though they almost bite off more than they can chew on a nearly half-hour opener, the RE pulls rabbits out of hats, defies gravity and goes way beyond the call of duty to bring it home. There's excellent improvising on the remaining two, "hu-man" and "collegno." The only bad thing that can be said is it's not up there with their A&M/Horizon record, which is like saying that K2 isn't as high as Everest.

Mutable 17514-2

<mutablemusic.com>

Richard Grooms

From Shelter

Steve Peters

Peters- piano

Marghreta Cordero- voices

Alicia Ultan- violas

Another Cold Blue single here. This one has two compositions by Peters on it. “Three Short Stories” is a sort of 20th century update of a baroque solo string essay. Ultan’s viola playing is assured throughout and the piece has an enjoyable stateliness to it. On “My Burning Skin to Sleep” Peters multitracks piano and vocals for a mystery-laden lullaby. It’s restive like the first track and it seems to know you’ve been through tragedies and offers a fine place to convalesce. I can’t say it’s healing music without risking cliché, but just ignore that old cliché and take my word for it: it’s very therapeutic and not bland in any way. It has a lot to offer the body and the mind in it.

Cold Blue

CB 0018

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Lucas Niggli and Sylvie Courvoisier

Lucas Niggli - drums
Sylvie Courvoisier – piano

This music immediately struck a chord of awe in me. Grand sonorities consisting of single tones and after resonance, space and durations of resonances. A sudden and surprising wash as a cymbal splash becomes soaked with harmonic timbers. Howlings from the piano, a wash of suspended metals, sustained intensity and resolve. The abstractions become colors, events, expressions of the subtle bodies of the instruments resurrected with new voices, carefully and cautiously stepping into the next dimension.

The sheer beauty of this recording, the exacting precision of sustained time, every gesture is placed to sit alone in the spotlight of

eternity's grand silence.

I've hear nothing til now as fresh and colorful, as original, indeed turning a new era of musical mastery as the personal expression of the universe is divined through these musicians. One of the most profound recordings of our time.

-LaDonna Smith

Intakt Records
PO Box 468
CH-8024 Zurich
Switzerland
email: Intakt@intaktrec.ch
www.intaktrec.ch

Accidents With Nature

Harris Newman- gtr., lapsteel

Bruce Cawdron- perc., glockenspiel

For most of my life I've been enamored of the nuevo folk Takoma label that came out of the 60s. Newman takes that sound (especially the John Fahey element) with its blending of American folk and Middle Eastern harmonics and reshapes it. The instruments used are acoustic, but Newman and Cawdron sometimes make them sound electronic, apparently with tape manipulation. It's all pretty Fahey-esque until "It's a Trap" introduces more idiosyncratic sound suggesting plaintive, prairie-like psychic landscapes. From here on, this is the shape of the album. Newman is with this cd still somewhat under Fahey's shadow, but a good two-thirds of the material here show him claiming a plot of land as his own- a darker, moodier, lonelier place than the Takoma boys have. It's worth your time.

Strange Attractors

SA H029

P.O. Box 13007

Portland, Oregon 97213-0007

www.strange.atractors.com

Richard Grooms

Rick Cox

Maria Falling Away

Rick Cox- elec. guitar, prepared elec. guitar, baritone elec. guitar,
alto sax, contra-alto clarinet, sampler

Guest artists (each on one track only):

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Thomas Newman- piano

Jeff Elmassion- clarinet

Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Here are six compositions (with some apparent improv) by Cox and others in duet format. On unusual occasions the Cold Blue esthetic can lapse into blandness, and the first three pieces here wouldn't be out of place on Music from the Hearts of Space. Which is a disappointment, knowing how much more Cox is usually capable of. 13 minutes into "The Years in Streams" and I was still waiting for it to take off. There's a lot of tapioca-like material here that just seems unending. This cd takes no risks (and risk is something Cold Blue excels at) and is almost unremittingly boring. But don't let it deter you from other Cox cd's which are vastly better than this one.

Cold Blue

CB 0006

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Fade

Rick Cox

Rick Cox-electric guitar

Thomas Freeman - bass, signal processors

If ECM is “the most beautiful sound next to silence” then Cold Blue, which has ECM DNA (but which isn’t jazz and not quite ECM New Series) is maybe the most austere sound next to silence. This cd single by Cox starts with floating, enshrouding electronics that almost makes you feel as if you’re leaving this world behind. That isn’t necessarily a good feeling but it’s certainly an intriguing one. One thinks of Tibetan bardo, exile-even death-but none of those states quite gets at what’s happening here. Think of Eno’s 70’s and 80’s slow-moving bits but think more substance and richness. If this sounds snooze-worthy, it’s not by a long shot. Actually, it’s oddly comforting, a place where the worst has already happened and a resounding calm has set in. I recommend it without hesitation.

Cold Blue

CB 0020

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Any Terrain Tumultuous

**Francois Houle (clarinet),
Marilyn Crispell (piano)**

Definitely compositions. The title track goes from very austere beginnings to eventually live up to it's name, Houle blowing circles around Crispell's clusters and runs. These are the most engaging parts of the disc for me, and I wish they'd just BLOW more often.

I guess the idea behind composing ideas to improvise around is so that the listeners, as well as the players, are spared those moments of wandering or un-inspiration. Does this point out a lack of ability in the composers? Perhaps. But these are two veterans, and I've heard them both improvise brilliantly in other contexts, so why the Forethought? Something to prove? Trying to get something across? I cannot in good conscience judge these compositions. They all sound more classical than jazz (to use worn-out terms) and during the written parts I find myself wishing they'd get to the fire. (When Crispell plays a solo, things burn right up.) I like the spareness of the two instruments' sounds, and the recording is excellent. My girlfriend, who's been listening along with me, found this CD more interesting than anything else I've played tonight.

jeph jerman

**Red Toucan
9527-A Foucher
Montreal, Quebec
H2M 1W3 Canada
tel: 514 381 0003
fax: 514 381 0004**

Shell Of Certainty

Steve Franklin (keyboards), **Tim Crowther** (guitar and guitar synth), **Tony Marsh** (drums).

Improvised electric music. These guys credentials look like a who's who of 'jazz-rock', or what we used to call 'prog-rock' back in the day. And sound-wise at least, that's what it calls to my mind. Memories of Crimso and the Softs, National Heath et al, kept recurring as I listened to this. But that's just the SOUND of it. The structures are all improvised, so there's not a lot of unison riffing or odd-meter time signatures. Instead we get tasteful use of effects and much interplay, the keyboards at times acting as backing for guitar forays, at others engaged in call and response, or setting a general mood.

"Council Of All Being" sets out to be a vehicle for Crowther's guitar in a no-key-or tone-center solo, with Franklin doing an excellent job of following along (or maybe, going there with!). Eventually the keys take over and the guitar synth backs up, and it's all stop/start staccato notes and drumming...until the big sweeping washes of chords come in and we're back to guitar space. At least I think that's what I'm hearing. It's hard to tell sometimes.

"Tremors" starts quieter and quicker, with more staccato, and definitely recognizable strings and keys. These gents are listening well to each other, with no one really taking over for any period of time. Eventually this tune turns to call and response-type textures the drummer alternating between filling in the holes and palying along with one or the other instrument.

"Arboreal" is more ethereal sounding, washes of echoed chords and ping

cymbals. Overall I'd recommend this to fans of the above mentioned bands, or anyone interested in listening to players that listen.

jeph jerman

Visionlogic
P.O.Box 24365
London SW17 9FG
U.K.
email: tim@visionlogic.demon.co.uk
www.visionlogic.demon.co.uk

distributed is the US by Wayside

HANGMAN'S HILL

CD

*Peter Blegvad with John Greaves
& Chris Cutler*

Peter Blegvad, guitar, vox, clarinet
John Greaves, bass, keyboards **Chris Cutler**, drums
& a buncha' other folk

You'd havta' be SMOKIN' th' mirrors to make the music on this CD be considered as improv. Electric folk-rock, without doubt. For those who were enchanted by Dylan's first round with electric guitars, this will bring back distinctly fond memories. There are some riffs where (if you REALLY stretched yer' imagination) ya' might consider there was an element of jazz to it, but improvised it's not. That dinna' render it unlistenable for me, though... some great lyrics, creative arrangements, even a hint of the psychedelic... & a nice rawkin' beat most all th' way through. If ya' need some great road music, GET this - but if your bent is for "bent", move on down th' line.
Rotcod Zzaj

ReR Megacorp
79 Beulah Road
Thornton Heath
Surrey CR7 8 JG
UK

LEG END

CD

Henry Cow

Geoff Leigh, reeds & vox, **Tim Hodgkinson**, keys, alto sax, clarinet, vox **John Greaves**, bass, piano, whistle, vox **Fred Frith**, guitars, violin, viola, vox **Chris Cutler**, drums, toys, piano, whistle, vox

I had listened to an old, OLD Henry Cow many years back & only remember an impression of "dirge", somehow. This CD starts off with (what sounds like) an homage to "Jazz From Hell", titled "Nirvana For Mice". Absolutely LOVED it... big-band rodent regalia! Touches of "smooth improv" on cut 2. There are some amazing vocal stretches on the last track, "Nine Funerals of the Citizen King", in a very orchestral meandering through modern rock-op. In the overall, this is a very interesting listen, certainly qualifying as a challenging listen. Some excellent guitar works (especially on track 6) & flow. Energy levels weren't quite what I anticipated, ergo a **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** rating. Those in love with listening through an entire CD for the intricate nuances at one sitting will find it very enjoyable.

-Rotcod Zzaj

MEGACORP

79 Beulah Rd., Thornton Heath

Surrey CR7 8UG

UK

Two Gentlemen In Verona

Fred Frith (electrified guitars, voice, jetsam)

Chris Cutler (drums, electrified drums flotsam)

The very beginning sounds for all the world like thunder, to which is soon added a wavering electronic wobble and stretchy guitar....they're back. If you've heard either of the other two live

discs by these two, you'll probably still be surprised. I was. Much more vocalizing from Fred this time out. And Cutler seems to lean heavily on the electrified end of his kit. If you've not heard these venerable old men yet, I suggest you take heed and prepare to have your ears pricked repeatedly. They run the gamut of string and skin and circuit w/o ever sounding like anyone else. Or maybe sounding like EVERYONE else all at once. Even bits of song-form appear and slink back into the mist about their knees. Sometimes it's hard to believe that this is just two people.

T'would that I could witness them in the flesh some day, I could die a happy man.

-jeph jerman

ReR Megacorp
79 Beulah Rd.
Thornton Heath, Surrey
CR7 8JG UK
megacorp@dial.pipex.com
www.megacorp.u-net.com

US distributor: Cuneiform
PO Box 8427
Silver Spring MD 20907

Japan distributor: Locus Solus
3-18-8 Naka-Ochiai
Shinjuku, Tokyo 161-0032
Japan

DalabaFrithGlickRiemanKihlstedt

Lesli Dalaba- trumpet

Fred Frith- gtr.

Eric Rieman- prepared & extended Rhodes elec. piano

Carla Kihlstedt- violin, elec. violin, Stroh violin

Whenever I test run an improv CD, one question I ask is: Does it pass the originality test? Many players who use free methods end up sounding more or less the same. Improv can be a tar pit: all that freedom is there, but that same freedom pulls legions into paradoxical conformity. This quartet easily clears that boondoggle. Though the playing is free, structure arises out of the air and lightly imposes itself. A highpoint is "Worm Anvil" which hits its stride when a taped bit sounding like one of Godzilla's rivals sets up a structure all of the group happily spin circles around. Frith is in top form here, summoning and utilizing an exhilarating array of textures, timbres and unexpected sounds. Not a few of the sonics here are things you can trace to any of the

above-listed instruments, so hats off to the spirit of inventiveness, but it means I can't definitively give credit to individual artists. I'm familiar with Frith's style, so it's easier to pick him out. So let me just say that the whole group deserves equal praise. They're doing a crack job in high style.

Accretions

ALP 030CD

www.accretions.com

Richard Grooms

Contemplative, relaxing and weird all at once. Certainly not a common mixture. It puts the listener on an odd plateau that provides a bizarre perspective that is balanced and unbalanced at the same time, much like waking up in a new world. Saxes, pianos and so on don't sound like saxes pianos and so on. And why should they? Pursue this and listen to it.

Amirani Records

AMRN 003

www.amiranirecords.com

Richard Grooms

Heritage and Ringtones

Martin Archer

Archer- reeds, keyboards, vioelectronics, processing, drum programs

Ingar Zach- perc.

Rhodri Davies- harp

Simon Fell- double bass

Julie Cole- voice

Tim Cole- acoustic gtr.

Masayo Asahara- processing

Archer combines electronics and acoustics, live playing and tapes, but most importantly, he blends harmony and disharmony, and does this in ways that are complimentary, unexpected and original. And on a few cuts he combines his love for English traditional folk music with free playing. I enjoy both these categories, but have never heard them Cuisinarted. They work blended as well as in tandem on this disc. Grace and rattling, taste and junk, convention and radical culture- all of these are here, and they judiciously balance each other out. Archer & Co. have good ears and good sense, which come together not often enough in the musical world. An unexpected treat.

Discus

Discus 18 CD

www.discus-music.co.uk

Richard Grooms

GHOST NOTES

CD

IST

Rhodri Davies, harp

Mark Wastell, violin & cello

Simon H. Fell, double bass

Those who fell in love with improvised music a long time ago will find this string-based trio's CD a delightful example of how intricate the weave can get. Much like a sonic tapestry, it's nearly impossible to escape the multi-threaded layers & moods once you start the music. Fell's bass work clearly provides the foundation layers, with Wastell & Davies adding the dancing shadows and light to provide a most enchanting aural vision that even the novice listener can enjoy. As you might imagine, I've "seen" many of these aural works over the last 30 years of improvised music... this stands out as an experience that will become an "instant improvised classic"! Impressive enough to rate a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from this reviewer. If you're looking for something to educate the unenlightened with, GET this CD. **Rotcod Zzaj**

Bruce's Fingers
24 Chauntry Road
Haverhill CB9 8BE
UK

Puzzle

Georgia Guitar Quartet

Kyle Dawkins- guitar, banjo

Brian Smith- 7 string guitar

Phil Snyder- guitar, cello

Jason Solomon- guitar, harmonica

An often surprising offer from a quartet new to me. Here's a quick rundown:

"Prelude"- In which nimble insects run lightly over guitar strings not making random sounds but refreshing ones.

"Flight"- A pleasurable back-and-forth between guitar pizzicato "verse" and Spanish "chorus." What Penguin Café might be doing if they were still around.

"Piece One"- The seductive rain of early minimalism. It could get you out of a hangover and more besides.

"Pan"- What the group calls a "structured improvisation," it succeeds in its own delicate way.

"Piece Two"- Minimalism again, it seems it ascend and descend at the same time.

Summing up: Pretty and often engaging, but it needs more grit and tension. This is mostly B work and I look forward to their A work. They need to work against their delicateness more than they do.

Solponticello

SP-022

www.solponticello.com

Richard Grooms

Bremen To Bridgewater

Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath

The Britcrits went gaga over this one and well they should have. Live 1971 and 1975 top drawer British jazz avant players (Elton Dean, Mongezi Feza, Louis Moholo, Evan Parker, Dudu Pukwana, McGregor and 11 others) are at their energized peak here. This is an absolute mother lode of white hot jazz. Do not let it slip by. Please do not. I thank you.

Cuneiform/Rune 182/183

<cuneiformrecords.com>

Richard Grooms

Unquenchable Fire

Deep Listening Band / Joe McPhee Quartet

Deep Listening Band:

Pauline Oliveros- accordion

Stuart Dempster- trombone, didjeridu

David Gamper- keyboards, flutes, electronics

Joe McPhee Quartet

McPhee- sop. sax, alto clarinet, Casio digital horn

Joe Giardullo- flutes, bass clarinet

Monica Wilson- cello

Karen Jurgens- drums

This is a departure for the Deep Listening Band. For one, they play along with a jazz quartet, in this case one who mines free jazz fields quite well. Two, the DLB is much less meditative and introspective than usual, taking on bizarre tonalities and noise the like of which I've never heard before from them or anyone else. And there is some text read (not much, and not over the music, which was the right decision). Gamper's electronics is the most unfamiliar sound in this mix. He can coax gentleness and impishness out of his array and this is fascinating. Oliveros provides her usual sublime atmospheric accordion clouds, full of drams. The two groups work very well together and this is fitting as free jazz has always been one of the DeepListening Band's ancestors.

DL 19-2003

www.deeplisting.org

Richard Grooms

Dempster, Stuart [Unquenchable Fire](#)

Please see:

Deep Listening Band [Unquenchable Fire](#)
Right above

Through Fire, Crevice and the Hidden Valley

Jim Denley

Jim Denley- alto sax & recording

Recorded live in an Australian National Park on a 15-day walk, this is some righteously original music-making. Denley has the ability to make his alto sax closely mimic natural sounds such as insects and trees and thus tightens their connections to humans. This in turn is marvelously tied in with the nature recordings employed throughout. Most of the time you can't tell what's part of the bush and what's Denley. What a tonic! Everything is brought into a complimentary, intertwined whole. This fulfills the Taoist ideal of merging the human and natural world. It'll be wholly unlike anything you've ever heard before. "Not man apart" indeed.

www.splitrec.com

9 Meals From Anarchy

Hanuman Sextet

Andy Haas- sax, raita, morsing, live electronics

Don Florino- lotar, lap steel gtr.

Mia Theodoratus- electric harp

Matt Heyner- bass, erhu

David Gould- drums, perc.

Deepop- drums, perc.

More unexpected and entirely fresh music from the Hanumans. One of the elements that most makes this so welcome, so left-field, is Theodoratus' electric harp. She adds piquant and enlivening darts to each track, helping to make them gravity-defying and disarmingly festive. In fact, there's a joyful, buoyant spirit throughout, partly because the group takes such a casual and unrespectful attitude toward jazz and free improvisation. To them total freedom really is a means to do something that upsets expectations and boundaries. Heyner's mournful erhu and Florino's corkscrewy lap steel bring outside-the-box intelligence and heart to the proceedings. The Hanumans continue to banish constrictions, which is as high a compliment as I can pay them. There's as much originality and sheer surprise here as you'd find in an average 20-30 free albums.

www.myspace.com/RADIOCHINGNEWYORK

contact: radioi-ching@earthlink.nt

Keep The Dog

Fred Frith

Fred Frith- gtr., bass, violin, voice

Jean Derome- alto, bari sax

Charles Hayward- drums, voice

Rene Lussier- gtr., bass

Bob Ostertag- sampler

Zeena Parkins- accordion, harp, piano, voice

I like noisy music, disconnected music, trainwreck music, blenderized music and all manner of discordant music. But I don't like this record save for the closer "Domaine." Most of this, like its near-contemporary *Speechless*, hasn't aged well. But if you're a partisan of the above bents (and, darlings, you know that you are), please check out the sound samples. You may violently disagree with me.

ReR/FRA 03

www.fredfrith.com

Voice Coil

Carrier Band

Pauline Oliveros- accordion with Expanded Instrument System

Peer Bode- live text with Bode Vocorder

Andrew Deutsch- live mixing, recordings, samples, loops, electronics

Stephen Vitiello- light meter recordings

If there was every a label that's consistently excellent it's Deep Listening. I've never heard a single cd of theirs that wasn't imaginative and challenging. *Voice Coil* is no exception. Like many records on the label it puts the listener in a rich, resonant aural space which is simultaneously restful and dizzying. The sort of space you'd want to dive into, swim around in, exult in. During the title track record you drift through ephemeral and etheric locations. You hear voices but you almost always can't tell what they're saying. Delicate but very strange electronics hover around. Oliveros' accordion streams all over, sometimes darting about. In addition to the title track there is "Frozen Speaker", an ionic bath for the ears and mind.

Deep Listening

DL 39-2008

www.deeplisting.org

Richard Grooms

Quartet Solo Series

Marina Peterson
Phillip Schultz
Jonathan Chen
Andrew DeWar

Four very extreme solo pieces, and they're evaluated below:

Marina Peterson / athens.s / for cello, paper clips, sticks

Peterson effectively gets you to focus on small details, tiny things, the possibilities of the very small. Floorboards creaking, doors opening and similar mundane things are transformed into much more than just random, uninteresting sound.

Phillip Schulze / Cause Unfold Proceed II / for electronics

This sortie comes across like a machine trying to communicate with humans. We can't understand it, but the effort the machine put into it was interesting and more than welcome. That machine probably has a rich life of its own when we're not hanging around.

Jonathan Chen / Drummer / for electronics

Basically one ongoing, virtually unchanging drone. Sound this limited pretty much made me feel like an irrelevant party. If La Monte Young's 60s group's drones were too maximal for you, you may latch onto this in a big way.

Andrew Dewar / Diptych / for soprano sax

A worthy entry in the genre where a sax is conceived of as a piece of metal capable of making sounds that don't sound recognizably saxophone-like at all.

Striking Mechanism

SM 0001

Richard Grooms

Adams/Cox/Fink/Fox

Marty Walker- clarinet, bass clarinet

Amy Knoles- vibes and marimba

Bryan Pezzone- piano

Maria Newman and Peter Kent- violins

Valerie Dimond- viola

Here are compositions by the composers in the title above-John Luther Adams, Rick Cox, Michael Jon Fink and Jim Fox-and brief interludes by Marty Walker. “Dark Wind”, the lead piece by Adams, is altogether too static and somber for me, the first time this composer hasn’t dazzled me. Fink’s “Thread of Summer” is an articulate, contemplative work that puts forth a rich autumnal half-light. Cox’s piece doesn’t stand out from tenure-oriented academic composition. He is, like Adams, capable of very much more. Fox’s gentle “Between the Wheels” shows that strings can create a hovering, birdlike atmosphere. It would have benefited from being a little shorter, but it’s a success.

Cold Blue Music

CB 0009

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Jeff Kaiser Ockodektet

Kaiser/Diaz-Infante Sextet

Kaiser-trumpet, flugelhorn

Diaz-Infante- prepared acoustic gtr.

Scot Ray- trombone

Jim Connolly- bass

Brad Dutz- perc.

Richie West- drums

The first 30-40 minutes of this cd is as instrumentally challenging and enjoyable as any of the Kaiser forays I've heard. But the text of this "Alchemical Mass" veers into pretension and embarrassment, a normal byproduct of reviving dead religions. All the more reason to sink your teeth into the sextet's very sharp session which follows the Mass. It's nervous, jittery, highly intense and breathtakingly buoyant. It's what you expect from Kaiser & Co. They can also be unsettling and spacious as on "Part 5". So just tune out the Latin during the Mass (easy for older Roman Catholics) and enjoy the non-vocal parts of this recording.

pfMentum

P.O. Box 1653

Ventura, Calif 93002

www.pfmentum.com

Richard Grooms

Franco Degrassi/ Gianni Lenoci (CD)

piano, musical workstation, environmental and acoustic sounds

This is why I review records. The label says they put out "contemporary jazz," but this isn't jazz-like at all. It's first-rate, highly imaginative free improvisation that doesn't swing or have any connection to the blues. With the mysterious "instrumentation" listed, it's anybody's guess who plays what or how the two produce the ravishing sounds they do. On luxurious, long tracks like "3" (almost exactly ten minutes long) the guys coax a heavenly range of harmonics from their axes. "5" evokes a large group of thumb pianos leading a collective of gregarious acoustics. "7" is an aching, plaintive piece that stirs up a penumbra full of longing. If Ligeti worked in the free improv music scene, he might make pieces like this. For fans of Tamia and Pierre Favre (worth seeking out!), this is must listening. As for Degrassi and Lenoci, long may they record!

Richard Grooms

ASC Records Ltd.
145A Chester Rd.
Macclesfield, Cheshire
England SK11 8PT
U.K.

16

Franco Degrassi / Gianni Lenoci

Degrassi- mixed tapes

Lenoci- piano, sax

St. Louis, Missouri was the site for this live set from two Italians whose previous work I've raved about (*Franco Degrassi / Gianni Lenoci*-ASC contemporary Jazz- ASC-CD#25). For the initial bit, seven minutes or so, there's the feeling of a machine shop shuffling off its tension after a hard day's work. This all happens of course after the humans have left. Then the piano comes in and reminds you what a crazy sort of harp it is. Time then for the shop talk to get ethereal and more obviously electronic, followed by an

interesting investigation of the sound of creaking wood and metal fixtures. This sound gets more abstracted and, in time, gives way to shoals of silvery metal fish swimming by. Maybe I should be saying that Lenoci does this and Degrassi does that, but it comes across as non-human sounds. That's the magic of the duo, to appear to remove themselves from the record. This is very high level playing and a great argument for the art of the improviser.

Email: ants.rec@silenzio-distribuzione.it

Richard Groom

Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise

Liz Albee- trumpet, shell, electronics

B. Deiler- drums

Killick Hinds- guitar, electronics, voice

Larry Ocha- tenor, soprano saxes

D. Porter- voice

If I misspelled any of the above info I offer apologies. The liner notes are very small-even with a magnifying glass. Same issue with the song titles only much more so.

This isn't gas music from Jupiter, it's post-everything music from Georgia. Blisteringly loud jazz-related material is here, and it's okay I suppose, but it's the watery/gargley/grunting content that is much more novel. It's funny, too, which is always welcome in the free improv corner of the world. There's a cut that gradually becomes the Tibetan monks with the ultra-long trumpets and all that melds with a sort-of jazz big band. It sounds unworkable on paper but it succeeds totally. On another track a cookie monster does a moody soul-funk outing; this one is good campy noise and a fine parody of adolescent gothic rock. Later on hip-hop and current dance music are put to surprising uses. A frequently successful pomo diversion, this album has plenty that rises and makes a fine mess.

Solponticello

S7 025

Richard Grooms

Bill Dixon Vade Mecum 1994 Soul Note/ Milano

Bill Dixon - trumpet, flugelhorn

Barry Guy - doublebass

William Parker - doublebass

Tony Oxley - percussion

1. Moment - (4'24")
2. Anamorphosis - (12'28")
3. Viale Nino Bixio 20 - (9'16")
4. Pellucity - (9'04")
5. Vade Mecum - (15'51")
6. Twice Upon a Time - (13'12")
7. Acanthus - (13'24")

“ How motion hereby is sensed in the minutae of tones”

“implication dominates how rhythms and pulse function more for their coloristic value than as velocities in a metric framework. Sounds are juxtaposed to intervallic sense, one to another so that the focal point of any passage is its direction rather than a tonal center” -Ben Young-

“A musician is more than a person who plays an instrument. The musician is an engineer of sound and should utilize any and every aspect of sound in the production of music” -Musician/Composer Jimmy Stewart-

“every instrument encompasses an orchestra”
-Musician/Composer Bill Dixon -

All these comments summarize concepts that some musicians have been developing since the 60's. Unlike many of the revivalist tendencies of today, the “jazz musician” (to use a common reference term which still has pejorative implications today) was formerly defined as someone who played the instrument like no one else.

Bill Dixon's personal approach and mastery of the trumpet is rarely discussed in the United States. His brilliance and purity of sound is compelling. The sudden tutti entrance is a fitting first take. Here are beautiful phrases constructed of fourths and fifths embellished by warm scalar colorings, poignant changes in register, and a modality not unlike the work of Miles Davis and John Coltrane particularly in the way Mr. Dixon can reduce a musical event to one sound or a few slow notes contrasted with evocative silences and compressed phrases.

I remember Bill Dixon saying that any sound can be used. “Noise” is equally expressive as a pristine tone. The listener might occasionally confuse a bowed bass note with a trumpet tone or the reverse.

Beginning Anamorphosis, (in contrast to Moment) Mr. Dixon plays speech like noises in the extreme registers of the trumpet. Witness also the sense of motion generated by two sudden airy bursts at the beginning of Viale Nino Bixio 29 which is immediately picked up by the basses and gradually builds to a soft but fast pulse and then a quick dissolution tapering to two long tones.

Beginnings and endings are arresting and clearly defined. Much of the intensity and momentum is accomplished without the density and volume associated with other artists in this music.

Cecil Taylor remarked that he learned from Ellington how instruments can sing together, if you choose the right timbre. Bill Dixon's ensemble demonstrates an affinity for reflective timbre in the way instruments cross registers and imitate each other's nuances. Notice this 6:30 into Pellucity where for about thirty seconds all the instruments alternate between blending and leaping out of the texture nearly indistinguishable from one another.

Bill Dixon may at times encompass several registers in one phrase. He has thought to use every possible register to create a musical orchestral spread. In this sense and because of the orchestration and rhythmic activity, four instruments can at times seem like many more.

The basses respond equally to the challenge. On *Twice Upon a Time*, Barry Guy's arco seems to follow every timbre, gesture, and register presented by the trumpet while William Parker plays slow intermittent pizzicato at points building to a quick pace after which a section is developed as the drums stop playing. Listen to the last three minutes. Amidst shrieks and flutters from the trumpet, one bass responds with short quick phrases while the other bows low and softly, so softly that at first the listener senses its presence but not its individual sound (as if the attack is hidden). Barry Guy voices over the trumpet. A quick cadence is made as the trumpet returns with the basses playing in the trombone register. The abrupt changes in register impart a form eventful and captivating.

The immediacy and sensitivity by which each musician can begin, accompany, and end or continue each others musical statements, the sense of impact, the subtle reactions of human timing all indicate a high level of attunement and acuity.

For those who are musicians or for anyone who views music as a form of knowledge like other arts and sciences in these times where music is increasingly a commodity that provides comfort and reassurance, this recording is a testament to the sound potential and subtleties of instruments in the twentieth century.

We praise synthesis for its own sake. We praise whimsical gimmicks for their sense of the unusual. We praise reproductions and dedications to the past like offerings upon an altar. Rather than curious or mystified, we are uncomfortable with the unfamiliar, and so we claim that the artist is impoverished by his or her limitations, but I believe it is the way an individual adheres to a particular limitation that separates that person from the interpreter and makes that person an artist.

"Limitation of means determines style, engenders new form, and gives impulse to creation." -George Braque "Thoughts and reflections on Art 1917"

And so we can hear as Bill Dixon has said, how, *"for some tradition can serve as a guide and for others it makes them a prisoner."*

-Eric Zinman

=

Aktivavoco - Edge City Collective

Jon Thompson (saxophones and flute),
Bart Miltenberger (trumpet),
Scott Schaffer -guitarist
Michael Taylor (bass)
Scott MacDonald (drums),
Woz (synthesizers)
Vicki Dodd, Vocalist

Aktivavoco Edge City Collective -

by Sam Mitchell

Independent release (2007)

Aktivavoco is the third in a sequence of improvisational recording projects by Edge City Collective. After two adventurous instrumental records, this installment is a sharp departure for the group. It explores fertile new ground in featuring four guest vocalists and an array of sampled voices.

Led by producer/guitarist Scott Schaffer, Edge City is not a band per se, but a group of collaborators based in the Philadelphia and Seattle areas. The core ensemble consists of Jon Thompson (saxophones and flute), Bart Miltenberger (trumpet), Michael Taylor (bass) and Scott MacDonald (drums), Woz (synthesizers) and Schaffer. While the instrumentalists again make stellar contributions, their primary role here is support for the vocalists, most notably Vickie Dodd.

After a free-flowing introductory duet between Dodd and Miltenberger, the program takes a series of sudden twists. "Aukcio" introduces Tuvan throat-singer Devan Miller and jazz vocalist Judith-Kate Friedman in a collage of dissonant and melodic sounds. "Verodangera," is a free-jazz accompaniment to a satirical reading of a scrambled political speech. "Sageco" contrasts Jim Couture's classical-tinged chanting with electronic sounds and a syncopated drum riff.

The spiraling slows by the album's seventh track, "Denove," which playfully revisits the trumpet-vocal theme, and *Aktivavoco* settles into a groove defined by creative interplay between the players and singers. Dodd exudes a spiritual energy that is at turns meditative and frenetic. After "Metamorfozo" builds to peak intensity, "Ridado" releases the tension in a hilarious collage built on Thompson's tenor solo. The album ends with the beautiful "Harmonio," and a moving coda by Dodd and Miltenberger.

Aktivavoco is Edge City Collective's most challenging work to date. Inventive, spontaneous and rewarding, it is a fitting end to the trilogy.

Edge City Collective website:

www.edgecitymusic.com

Process 2

Rafal Mazur - bass
Rafal Drewniany - laptop
Michal Dymny - e-guitar
and
Attila Dóra - sax

The newest AudioTong release is an out-come of one of the improvised sessions which are frequently organized by musicians from improviser's collective working at "Laboratory of Intuition - studio of developing and promotion of improvised art" which is located in Krakow.

The music is fiercely beautiful. I am completely energized by it! The events on Untitled 1 take you into a realm of huge spacial clarity, with the vibratory energies releasing, & entraining symbiotic energies in your spatio-physical-auditory awareness. Your voices are heard, and visualized, ringing true and clear! Untitled 2, brings the energy it all up close and saturates you with its penetrating demanding presence. It only escalates from there... Untitled 3 again returns you into the "realm" the "zone" the inner mindings ...and Untitled 4 sounding the terrain of drips, and air, pops, and reverberations of the inner digestion of musical molecules and morphs.. A comfort food.

PROCESS- Laboratory of Intuition is an ensemble of improvisers founded by Rafal Mazur in 2004.

The music is downloadable here:

<http://audiotong.net/audio/releases/tng1027-en.html>

www.rafaalmazur.com
www.improart.eu

~LaDonna Smith

Acoustic Isles

Christy Doran-acoustic guitar

Christy Doran has with this cd confirmed that he's one of the most inventive and bracing acoustic guitar improvisors going. He's experimental without being self-indulgent, propulsive without being monotonous, novel without being gimmicky. Sometimes using electronic modifications to his mostly acoustic palette, Doran has created a new sort of electro-acoustic (or acoustic-electro) genre for guitar. It doesn't always come off, but it succeeds the large majority of the time. (Note: this cd is part of a 2-disc package, the second disc of which is a DVD. This DVD wouldn't play on my late model DVD player due to an apparent format restriction).

Creative Works Records

CWI04P/50

www.creativeworks.ch

Richard Grooms

Bedouin Hornbook

Rich West

pfMentum CD 016

Chris Heenan- bass clarinet

Bruce Friedman- trumpet

Jeremy Drake- elec. gtr.

Scot Ray- tuba

Rich West- drums

Like nothing I've ever heard before from free jazz players: that's what the first parts sound like. Considering how some free jazz-related material can tend toward sameness, that's saying something. Cut three ("Twang"), however, conjures up something very different: Australian aborigine dijeridoo players playing along with Tibetan monks who are doing low register vocal drones (it works very well). It's astonishing that the folks here can get these sounds out of the above-listed instruments. This track transitions nicely into a spirited romp and that somehow works, too. I wished for even more of the drone mode; it was a truly amazing groove. This group has a talent for consistently making very unexpected sounds from conventional instruments. I wish they'd showed even more of that here, but to do as much as they have is remarkable. They sound a little like the Art Ensemble of Chicago, only contorted. Usually this works (as on "Furcifer"), less often not. If the Art Ensemble is once removed from the jazz mainstream, these folks are twice removed. So to call them jazz at all is iffy. And they deserve kudos (or horned bucks) for getting all that right.

**pfMentum
P.O. Box 1653
Ventura, Calif.
93002**

Richard Grooms

Descansos, Past

Jim Fox

Barry Newton- double bass

Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick- cello

Jessica Catron- cello

Aniela Perry- cello

Rachel Arnold- cello

“Descanso” is Spanish for rest, peace and quiet and those words give a rough description of the music on this cd single. Newton’s strong, stately bass supports and departs from the able cellos, and the whole adds up to austere beauty. This platter does suggest a place of calm, but the emotions connected with lamentation, penitence and sorrow are also in play here. A fine record is the result.

Cold Blue

CB 0021

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

On The Leopard Altar

Daniel Lentz

Voices-Jessica Lowe, Paul Mackey, Susan James, Dennis Parnell

Keyboards-Brad Ellis, David Kuehn, Arlene Dunlap, Lentz

Wineglasses-Ellis, Kuehn, Dunlap, Lowe, James

This record came out first in 1984 on Icon records then quickly went out of print to my dismay. It got good notices then and I have to say it was well worth the wait. Five early compositions by Lentz are here. In “Is It Love?” the voices chant texts in hypnotic, subtractive patterns. It makes you think of early Glass only it’s more informal and hotwired. “Lascaux” for wineglass ensemble makes sound wave reverberation a positive virtue. Lentz is the champion and master of the under-appreciated wineglass. Here, as in so much of his career, he fully embraces beauty, which is almost as reckless today as it was in 1984. That’s other folks’ loss. The work is as gorgeous as all get-out, so bleak modernists were being given notice. “On The Leopard Altar” is mesmerizingly attractive, even lush, and the ensemble here, as on every track on this record, performs excellently. The voices are partly Glassian, but much more erotic than anything the sober Glass was coming up with. “Wolf Is Dead” has plenty of repetitive playfulness and is very light on its feet. “Requiem” takes words from a Latin Mass and might be the soundtrack for a Catholic David Lynch movie. This is one of the very best Cold Blues. Enthusiastically recommended.

Cold Blue

CB 0022

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Point Conception

Daniel Lentz

Lentz-composer

Arlene Dunlap-piano

Bryan Pezzone-piano

“Point Conception”, one of Daniel Lentz’s major early pieces, is back on cd here. The title piece is scored for nine pianos, all played by Lentz, who multitracks himself. Nine pianos may sound like overkill to some but it is a delicate, lithe and agile work and it seems as though no more than three or four pianos are going at any one time. The piece proceeds ever onward in ecstatic, even rapturous ways. Like much of Lentz’s output it’s inviting and a pleasure to listen to. Lentz has long since committed the heresy of making modern classical music that bears no relation to castor oil and once again I take my hat off to him. This is one of the great 70’s minimalist compositions. “Nightbreaker,” also included here, is for four pianos, in this case multitracked by Pezzone. It sounds nothing like any Lentz work I’ve ever heard, integrating Liszt-like late Romanticism and frenetically repeated Latin American strains into an overall dizzying success. A cd essential for all followers of minimalism and post-minimalism.

Cold Blue

CB 0028

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

2 Many Axes

Many Axes

Susan Rawcliffe- ceramic flutes, ocarina, etc.

Scott Wilkinson- ceramic winds, ethnic flutes, etc.

Brad Dutz- udu, bodhran, etc.

In a few words: vital, ritualistic, pan-global acoustic improvising. Many Axes is light years away from culture-mixing pitfalls such as contrived or travelogue clichés. Instead, they're instinctive, organic (an over-used word, but it perfectly describes their approach), spontaneous. Highly imaginative musicians and a unique mix of conventional and invented instruments propel this recording into unexplored territory. They go into meditational musical spaces that Pauline Oliveros explores but in their own fearless way. There's something elemental-even magical-on this recording. One of the best CDs I've ever reviewed.

Pfmentum

CD 020

www.pfmentum.com

www.artawakening.com/soundworks/manyaxes

Richard Grooms

Jeff Kaiser Ockodektet

Kaiser/Diaz-Infante Sextet

Kaiser-trumpet, flugelhorn

Diaz-Infante- prepared acoustic gtr.

Scot Ray- trombone

Jim Connolly- bass

Brad Dutz- perc.

Richie West- drums

The first 30-40 minutes of this cd is as instrumentally challenging and enjoyable as any of the Kaiser forays I've heard. But the text of this "Alchemical Mass" veers into pretension and embarrassment, a normal byproduct of reviving dead religions. All the more reason to sink your teeth into the sextet's very sharp session which follows the Mass. It's nervous, jittery, highly intense and breathtakingly buoyant. It's what you expect from Kaiser & Co. They can also be unsettling and spacious as on "Part 5". So just tune out the Latin during the Mass (easy for older Roman Catholics) and enjoy the non-vocal parts of this recording.

pfMentum

P.O. Box 1653

Ventura, Calif 93002

www.pfmentum.com

Richard Grooms

Guitarrasalto

Edge City Collective

Jon Madof (guitars),
Scott Schaffer (guitars, bass guitar, mandolin),
Michael Taylor (double bass, bass guitar),
Jon Thompson (tenor saxophone, flute, melodica),
Ranji Kumar (accordion)

Not at all what I expected, but that's what I get for expecting, eh?

Edge City Collective use the studio as an integral part of their musical process, and their improvising would seem accumulative as opposed to collectively spontaneous. Nothing wrong with that. The players are all fine musicians, with chops a-plenty and the wherewithall to apply them. So what does the music sound like? Well...pick a title, any title.

"Chesapeake Raga", very tonal, lilting guitars and horns. "Osweetmoses", trad-jazz, maybe even a bit of bluegrassyness..."Fantango Primo", sounds like it's title, accordion pumping rhythm while flute improvises and guitars and bass embellish. Each title sounds very different from the one before or after it. The group does seem to maintain an identity though. And the lack of a drummer works in their favor. I can imagine a bombastic tub-thumper ruining a few of these little ditties. If your taste in listening runs toward the sweet and tonal, pick this up. If your more inclined to want dissonance or out and out noise, steer clear.

jeph jerman

EdgeCity Music.com
129 Upland Terrace
Bala Cynwyd, PA. 19004
(610) 668-8436
www.edgecitymusic.com
fivemonk@bee.net

Earth Dances Rain Dances

Mario Rechtern - reeds and electronica

Georg Edlinger - drums and electronica

A Review / Interview by Eric Zinman

This is a review that is juxtaposed with dialogue from the artist based on my correspondences with the artist. All quotes below are those of Mario Rechtern. (2 CD's in 2002 on his label l.abop)

Labop is multi-reedist, Mario Rechtern's foundation. It has mutated from a Laboratory of (H)Armonic Basics and Open Products in the 80-ies to a forum for improvised action during the 90-ies. It is inspired by the "open rehearsal black music orchestra" of the University of Wisconsin where he played in the 70-ies. It is an lsg-austria/vienna registered label carrying his name .

The cover that appears as attractive animal skin, earth/brown and rain/blue, presents the elements: earth and rain dances ...with ,of course , fire and wind .This is all that we are and all that engulfs and surrounds our bodies. It is a wilderness of sound between the human and the electronic and frequently one cannot know the difference. There is a suggestion of incidental music, but with a high and low tension that makes casual listening impossible. bravo! Sounds and samples recede and resurface creating an orchestra out of two.

“but i grew up with that statement, not just about my sound..

I had a lot of sounds to penetrate, ask questions and do not let the listener have any peace- if he wants that : he go in the mountains and look for the real...i said long time ago (i lost a friend on a glacier in switzerland when i was 17), but as a general statement to saxophone I had to hide my first sax from my parents (while officialy playing violin (and clarinette- that was allready nice of them to concede that reed) and had to practice in the forest at night....).yet at 28 i was playing concerts or was sitting in in jazzbands, that were very quickly ended by a policeintervention - of course because of loudness , but all musicians agreed: that is not the reason--- there is s.th. else ---again look down into your review - you describe, what a lot of people in europe do not support: their culture here is bio and wellness while at home their kids rip off the legs of the flies they get hold of and their parents might do other things to each other while unseen.... yes if frank wright was steelworker in detroit he is the best address to express what i mean and what i call real bricks in music. ever heard a metall-circularsaw?”

Sometimes I imagine this music as a satire of hip hop tracks with its humourous squeeks and scratches which is charming in the dada sense. There are some turkish as well as chassidic flavored melodies on some tracks. The endings are often suddenly cut at a busy moment which is startling if you're listening.

“ things that look like ironic onto hip hop etc or the mixing of dry and

wet or putting up the low and high against the middle class making casual listening impossible was very intentional even the dada sense (there is another concert CD on a Schwitters exposition called: hermetologies about and within the eclectic electronic music scenery) the turkish (persian) and chassidic colour is fact and my musical basics(origin) and reference. the endings were cut off harshly after long weekends and thoughts about fading out or not- i made georg come 60 km to listen to this detail and help on decision. hahaha : one might have to search through every locker untill one found the transmitter that sounds like my life: the research of lost times. yes thats it, what i mean. and thats why this turkish and chassidic. we had a good review at the times being but a lot of people did not like it and got mad on the review.”

At times I get lost in the texture, contemplating the tapping of plants and animal sounds in motion or rain coming down. Reeds become sand and wind with flagellating plant stems. Machines click in the background amidst screams and seals in heat with wailing hyena vibrato and metal circular saws (the reverend Frank Wright was a steel worker) that turn into saxophones. There is an uplifting feeling as the pure saxophone/percussion duet emerge from the the bubbling samples, a kindred beauty with John Coltrane, Albert Ayler and Frank Wright. Occasionally it sounds like a tiny cassette player hidden in a metal locker in a row of lockers in an empty metal room. One might have to search through every locker until one found the transmitter like some GI pirate radio in Vietnam. My contemplation keeps bubbling to the surface and making me laugh.

Without these human voices the jungle would seem lonely. Music is mysteriously ideology. There is no peace, only the joy of hunger and fulfillment, continuity and exquisite form.

Contact Mario Rechtern_
labop@utanet.at

Earth Dances

Georg Edlinger-drums, electronics

Mario Reichturn-reeds, electronics

Anarchic joy is the main thrust on Earth Dances. There's control, of a sort, reining it all in, and this keeps the session from being a pointless noisefest. But still there's fire here aplenty. The tracks are all cut off before they have a chance to get boring. Each one is a boiling stew that spurts out bits into the air. Some free jazz, some sci-fi electronic weirdness and a lot of burning rhythms. Mix it all together and watch it explode over and over. It never relents. This is very likeable. Not many could pull off what this duo does.

www.labop.org

labop 0019

Richard Grooms

Shadow Machine

Tom Hamilton / Bruce Eisenbeil

Hamilton- Nord Modular Synthesizer

Eisenbeil- guitar

Big on those old standbys discontinuity and abstraction, but not big on loudness and shock tactics, this record is selective in its out-ness. Occasionally it can get samey and wearisome, but it's typically quite capable of demonstrating the power of freedom and noise. Total freedom requires a very high level of inventiveness-otherwise, routine sets in. This duo are usually up to the challenge.

Pogus Productions

Pogus 21051-2

www.pogus.com

Richard Grooms

On The Leopard Altar

Daniel Lentz

Voices-Jessica Lowe, Paul Mackey, Susan James, Dennis Parnell

Keyboards-Brad Ellis, David Kuehn, Arlene Dunlap, Lentz

Wineglasses-Ellis, Kuehn, Dunlap, Lowe, James

This record came out first in 1984 on Icon records then quickly went out of print to my dismay. It got good notices then and I have to say it was well worth the wait. Five early compositions by Lentz are here. In "Is It Love?" the voices chant texts in hypnotic, subtractive patterns. It makes you think of early Glass only it's more informal and hotwired. "Lascaux" for wineglass ensemble makes sound wave reverberation a positive virtue. Lentz is the champion and master of the under-appreciated wineglass. Here, as in so much of his career, he fully embraces beauty, which is almost as reckless today as it was in 1984. That's other folks' loss. The work is as gorgeous as all get-out, so bleak modernists were being given notice. "On The Leopard Altar" is mesmerizingly attractive, even lush, and the ensemble here, as on every track on this record, performs excellently. The voices are partly Glassian, but much more erotic than anything the sober Glass was coming up with. "Wolf Is Dead" has plenty of repetitive playfulness and is very light on its feet. "Requiem" takes words

from a Latin Mass and might be the soundtrack for a Catholic David Lynch movie. This is one of the very best Cold Blues. Enthusiastically recommended.

Cold Blue

CB 0022

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Sandbox Trio

Urubamba

Martin Birke- octapad, perc., drums, keyboards

Chuck Ellis- lap steel gtr., fretless bass, thwackoleum, loops, tapes

Daniel Panasenکو- classical and prepared gtrs., pvc sax, elec. erhu, clay flute, perc.

Sort of group of improv tone-poems about the Urubamba river in South America, these pieces frequently shade into New Age music. When it's not patchouli wallpaper it's not bad at all; in fact, it can be very good indeed. It rises to this level about 25% of the time. Not a high rate, but if they could maintain it for a whole album I'd welcome it with open arms. And that raises a question: If you can do that level work, why bother with New Age? So *Echoes* will program it?

CD FMA 0414

Frank Mark Arts

www.frank-mark-arts.com

We Are

Emily Hay / Marcus Fernandos

Hay-voice, flute, piccolo, piano, electronics

Fernandos-perc., field recordings, electronics

Lisle Ellis-bass, electronics

Ellen Weller-sax, flute

Al Scholl-guitar

If all Emily Hay did was sing, she'd be plenty impressive. That she can do so very much with reeds is gravy aplenty. And there's more to come, as they say. Three people are listed here as doing electronics and since they overlap so much I can't tell them apart. They are all marvelous at what they do, however. This is a record full of mysterious calls and silence, highly evocative textures and very assured playing throughout. Hay and Fernandos have chosen their partners well, and the whole shebang is testament to the wisdom of releasing the goods from the unconscious. Very high marks for every track here.

Public Eyesore

PECD 97

www.publiceyesore.com

Rick Cox

Maria Falling Away

Rick Cox- elec. guitar, prepared elec. guitar, baritone elec. guitar,
alto sax, contra-alto clarinet, sampler

Guest artists (each on one track only):

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Thomas Newman- piano

Jeff Elmassion- clarinet

Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Here are six compositions (with some apparent improv) by Cox and others in duet format. On unusual occasions the Cold Blue esthetic can lapse into blandness, and the first three pieces here wouldn't be out of place on Music from the Hearts of Space. Which is a disappointment, knowing how much more Cox is usually capable of. 13 minutes into "The Years in Streams" and I was still waiting for it to take off. There's a lot of tapioca-like material here that just seems unending. This cd takes no risks (and risk is something Cold Blue excels at) and is almost unremittingly boring. But don't let it deter you from other Cox cd's which are vastly better than this one.

Cold Blue

CB 0006

www.coldbluemusic.com

Embryo - “Ni Hau”

Paramashivan Pilai - vocal, tavil

Chuck Henderson - soprano sax

Christian Burchard - vibes, percussion, marimbas, cymbal, vocal

Chris Lachotta - bass

Geoff Goodman - mando-cello, guitar

Xizhi Nie -erhu, muyu, sheng, gaohu

Yulyus Golombeck - oud, guitar

Albert Kuvezin - vocal

Lothar Stahl - percussion, marimba

Jens Pollheide - bass, flute

Roman Bunka - setar, oud

Sascha Alexandrov - bassoon

Jamal Mohmand - harmonium, vocal

Yusuf Eshag - tabla

Chris Karrer - oud

Mostafa Raafat - nai

Hermann Breuer - trombone

Peter Michael Hamel - keyboard

(The musicians listed above play on some and/or all of the songs on this release)

I am simply going to summarize the liner notes because they state what needs to be said very clearly.

“Ni Hau” means “you good, that’s how the Han Chinese people say hello to each other. The fluteplayer Huangjia Li was the main connection to meeting some of the beautiful Chinese instrumentalists and singers who live all over Europe.

Before that time our knowledge of Chinese music was pretty limited. We followed the odd prejudice of Chinese melodies consisting only of five notes, or that the sound we hear as background music in Chinese restaurants is their music-culture. Meanwhile we understand that the vocabulary created in Chinese music is just as rich as in the Oriental cultures. There are many different microtonal modes and the rhythms can almost compete with African beats.

Zizhi Nie, a master musician and expert of the many different musical languages of China, is the main force to help us understand the inexhaustible universe of Chinese music. While we were learning modes and melodies from this far east country he got used to the ...Embryo-method...of improvisation, no matter if it is Indian or oriental modes, odd rhythms, various harmonic changes or just free interplay, "Ni Hau" is the first result of that peaceful and creative exchange!"

I have been listening to this CD for around a year and it still sounds as good as the first time - it is beautifully done and every musician plays his instrument to perfection. I am especially fond of the songs with bassoon and/or sitar. Each song is a bit different yet they blend together so well. It is Chinese music with a jazz twist, with african and indian beats, yet traditional and improvised all at the same time. I could go on about each song individually, but the liner notes give you detailed information about that, so I will end this review by saying this CD will appeal to even the most discerning ear and lovers of every type of music. Need to get this one for your collection! - Robin Taylor

Embryo
Dollmannstr. 27
D-81541 Munchen
Fax 089-2730875

Distribution: Espangna: Edition Nova Era, S.C.P., Apartat de Correus 30239 E-08080
Barcelona, N.E.C.D. 4003

Italia: Materiali Sonori; ph: 055-9120363; fx: 055-9120370

Liquid Metal Dreaming

Robert Evans- crwth, tambura, lyre, fiddle, voice

Laurie Scott Baker- double bass, electric upright bass, perc.

Nine tracks using the harmonic series in fresh and inventive ways. Sounding simultaneously medieval and highly contemporary, this is a blend of Hildegard of Bingen and the California Cold Blue aesthetic. Calming, edifying-even exalted at times-this is a must for the just intonation faithful.

Musicnow

MNCD 010

www.whatismusic.co.uk

Richard Grooms

Exploring Biology

Exzoskeleton

Tara Peter-Daughter (alto sax), Weasel Walter (tenor sax, bass clarinet),

Joe Shrapnel (synthesizer), Billy Sides (percussion), Crazy Andy (guest synthesizer).

This definitely fits in with the school I affectionately refer to as

Crash-n-Bash. Not a lot of delicate interaction on this disc, and as with

other loud free-jazz¹ practitioners, it's often difficult to discern what

instrument is making which sound. I find this a plus. I think the aesthetic

is one of immersing oneself in an overwhelming chaos of sound of one's own.

This practice can be very cathartic, (as many will attest, and downright

fun.

So, does it make for good listening? I suppose that would depend on your

point of hearing, (or state of mind). The recording is pretty good, except

for one point where the cymbals turn into wash of high-end sizzle that, at high volume, might really hurt. If you're into energy as opposed to chops, you may want to check this out.

At one point a few years ago, I thought that this kind of music would replace rock as the choice of rebellious teenagers. I guess young hormones need a BEAT more than I allowed. -Jeph Jerman

No Sides Records
P.O. Box 257491
Chicago IL 60625
exzosides@cs.com

Distribution thru North Country

Michael Fahres

The Tubes

Fahres- composer, tapes

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Parik Nazarian- voice

Mark Atkins- didgeridoo

On this Cold Blue disc are three compositions with room for a good bit of improvisation. Starting off is "Sevan", a sort of lament for the Armenian lake of that name, a victim of industrialization. Parik Nazarian sings from inside one of the abandoned metal pipes that line part of the lake, producing vocal clouds that suggest a Central Asian Ligeti sound world. This voice alternates with a scraping, percussive noise which forces the listener back to earth, then it's the clouds again, then the scraping, and so on, making for a somewhat disorienting but pleasing whole. If you take that scrape down to a smoothly-textured sound, you'll get the very heavy breathing of "The Tubes", built on a tape of volcanic rock tubes that channel forced ocean water. Fahres recorded them on site on the shores of an unspoiled island that is part of the Canary

Island group. This tape (or tapes, maybe?), used as a rhythm track, is accompanied by Jon Hassell and his signature electronically-hushed trumpet and Mark Atkins' didgeridoo, three sorts of tubes joining together for an exploration of hollowness, fullness, emptiness and solidness. I say that the tape is accompanied as if it's a musician because it holds an equal place with the two humans here; it's a kind of musician itself, partly because all three tube sounds work so well together. It's scary relaxation music, full of the contradictions that phrase implies. "Coimbra 4, Mundi Theatre", which Fahres assembled out of tapes of a Portuguese music festival he did not attend, is another strange attractor as it floats in the mind like a harmonious, misarchived trace of musical memory. It is musique concrete of a very beguiling sort.

Fahres' pieces are haunting and they stay in the mind in a calming and elliptical way. Post-Classical music at it's best.

Cold Blue – CB 0024

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

RAUME/Spazi/Espaces/Spaces cd

Walter Fahndrich

Walter Fahndrich - Bells, whistles

I haven't listened to an album/CD (quite) like this in some years. As the title implies, it's oriented to make you feel the spaces between the tones. From the standpoint of improvised music, it's not quite what one might think - but that does NOT mean it isn't *improvised*. Very slow strides, intermittent bell tones, and a clear sense of direction all blend to create a very peaceful experience. It would (I'd imagine) serve as a great backdrop for the pleasant parts of an acid trip, tho' I doubt that's what Walter had in mind. The least creative part of the CD is the track titles... 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. I (personally) believe it's very important to attach some (of your own) impressions of what the music means through the use of titles that are just as creative as the music. That is only a minor complaint, though, as it's an enjoyable musical experience that rates a RECOMMENDED from me.

-Rotcod Zzaj

UNIT Records
POB 53, CH 1789
Lugnorre

unit@music.ch
<http://www.unitrecords.com>

Portrait

Pierre Favre (Percussion)

Solo percussion miniatures (the longest is 7 minutes), that more often than not concentrate on one small section of Favre's immense Kit. Melodically.

Small motifs are stated and varied, occasionally interrupted by a new sound/new motif. Gamelon orchestras and John Cage's percussion music both leapt to mind while I listened. 'Stampede' is a favourite. Is he playing all that at once? 'Yellow' begins with, what is that, spinning coins on the heads? Now we're talking! Segue into rolls on bells, a giant chord building by single increments, until it's hail on the brass roof. Breaks with a cymbal fade and dripping tube drums. (I really wish I could see his drum kit better.) At times asian, at others european echoes sound here.

Having never heard Pierre Favre's music before I wasn't sure what to expect. And at times I admit I wish he'd just FLAIL a little, but I can't help but like this little disc.

Yes, I'm a sucker for solo drum records.

jeph jerman

Unit Records
PO Box 1474
CH-8610 Uster
Switzerland
ph/fax: ++411 942 22 63
unit@music.ch

Thus

Tripod Mind

Neil Feather & John Berndt- Nondo, Melocipede, Vibro-wheel array, Guitaint, Venitian Glass Nephew, Peasant Instrument, Ultra Hodge, Appologetica, Aleatron

The whimsical names of the instruments played by Thus herein and the absence of descriptions of them in the liner notes make my job harder than usual, but so what? These guys are musical pataphysicians and are up to electronic jesterling of a fine sort and I'm not put out. Their tripod mind is suggested by three bowling balls, the schematic of their floor shows conceals more than it reveals and the musician in the photo on the back cover (uncredited, natch) is doing his best to look like a brown castoff of the Blue Man Group. It starts off more than okay, and three tracks in I'm intrigued, mesmerized even. These guys know their way around a Rube Golbergian electronic array and the sounds emanating from it are surprise-ridden, alien-friendly and sometimes Partchian. A hotdang combo sound here. Sound for the weirdness of it, sound for the purpose of alienating the listener's expectations, sound for the kid-like joy of it. Some of the sounds will be familiar to *Improvisor* readers, many won't. I couldn't begin to say who is playing what. There none of the stop-and-start disconnected edginess peculiar to tons of free improve Instead, all of the sounds above are part of a musical flow, a meaningful arc. This is a must-listen. Buy it and start enjoying it today in the comfort of your own rec room. It's way above the improve norm.

www.recorded.com

Richard Grooms

Haiku

Michael Jeffrey Stevens -piano
Mark Feldman - violin

I love the awesome sense of a pregnant space and the depth of emotion quite packed in this work. It is a beautiful offering of heart and soul, very individual.. interesting that Michael Jeffrey Stevens speaks so from a jazz reference, although I can hear it in his playing, it sounds very classical to my ears.. I guess that's the way Mark Feldman comes off as well, together they imply a very 20th century romantic compositional tone in expressiveness. All the pieces are beautiful and rich with color, a full spectrum of sound introspection. One of the few CD's I've heard where you get the impression that the performers are listening beyond listening, the burst arising from the bombshell of the heart, as the flight or fight response occasionally intervenes, there is always beauty.

www.erjn.it/mus/stevens.htm

Contact: Michael Jeffry Stevens

PO Box 40551, Memphis, TN 38174-0551 (USA)

ph: +1 901 2766544, mobil: +1 917 9161363, fax: +1 413 5139859

e-mail: mjsjazz@bellsouth.net

LaDonna Smith

Winter Pilgrim Arriving

Martin Archer (sonic dp, synthesizers, sopranino sax, Bflat and Bass clarinets, consort of recorders, vioelectronics),

Derek Saw (cornet),

Simon H. Fell (double bass),

Tim Cole (acoustic guitar),

Charlie Collins (flute, sampling),

Gino Robair (percussion),

James Archer (amplified Objects),

Mick Beck (bassoon),

Sedayne (crwth).

This CD is comprised of compositions built up in the studio from improvisations, which are added to, manipulated or otherwise transformed by their settings. In the notes accompanying the disc, Archer speaks of music from a certain period, the late sixties/early seventies work of the Canterbury school of progressive rock, and the concomittant folk-rock sounds that were coming out of England during the same period, and how it conjured for him the feeling that music could be/ do anything. These compositions give me a similar feeling, but they sound completely modern. Unlike a lot of other constructions of this type that I've heard, the patchwork and various graftings don't come across as such. This music sounds like it all happened live, made by an army of sympatico musicians with an arsenal of equipment and a communal working approach. The sounds themselves are often quite disparate, but they are put together in such a way as to make them WORK magically. I'm impressed as hell by these little assemblages, and each time I listen, the amount of detail unfolds in a new way for me.

In the same set of notes, (a press release actually), Archer sadly admits that this may be the last disc from his label, due to a lack of commercial viability. He brings up the point that there seem to be far more people making "out" music these days than buying it, and while I'm sorry that his label may produce no further examples of his work, I'm hopeful that the sheer numbers of people investigating sound may usher in a period of renewed importance in listening as a past-time. Maybe someday soon we could all learn to make sounds together as an everyday thing, and get away from the idea of sound as a commodity. Hmmm.

Jeph Jerman

**Discus
PO Box 658
Sheffield S10 3YR
England**

www.discus.mcmail.com

Heritage and Ringtones

Martin Archer

Archer- reeds, keyboards, vioelectronics, processing, drum programs

Ingar Zach- perc.

Rhodri Davies- harp

Simon Fell- double bass

Julie Cole- voice

Tim Cole- acoustic gtr.

Masayo Asahara- processing

Archer combines electronics and acoustics, live playing and tapes, but most importantly, he blends harmony and disharmony, and does this in ways that are complimentary, unexpected and original. And on a few cuts he combines his love for English traditional folk music with free playing. I enjoy both these categories, but have never heard them Cuisinarted. They work blended as well as in tandem on this disc. Grace and rattling, taste and junk, convention and radical culture- all of these are here,

and they judiciously balance each other out. Archer & Co. have good ears and good sense, which come together not often enough in the musical world. An unexpected treat.

Discus

Discus 18 CD

www.discus-music.co.uk

Richard Grooms

Pure Water Construction Discus CD 11

Simon Fell: sampling, bass gtr., double bass

Martin Archer: sound processing, electronics, drum machines

Fell and Archer and many, many others too numerous to list combine improv with compositions to the point where neither of those categories seems to have much relevance. That's just fine. As the title suggests, this is decidedly industrial music. Or should I say the more fashionable word "soundscapes." If you were to walk through an active but peopleless factory and listen carefully... Well, you might occasionally think, "Wait, that's not meaningless noise, there's an intelligence behind these hummings and dronings and bleepings." And you'd be right. It sounds not quite like the machinery's been left running, but that something is using the machinery to make its own noise. This cup of java's too ahuman for me. If, however, you like the idea of the factory doing its take on what the humans do with the factory, then this is your ticket to the experimental shop floor.

Richard Grooms

Discus
PO Box 658
Sheffield S10 3YR
England
U.K.

GHOST NOTES

CD

IST

Rhodri Davies, harp
Mark Wastell, violin & cello
Simon H. Fell, double bass

Those who fell in love with improvised music a long time ago will find this string-based trio's CD a delightful example of how intricate the weave can get. Much like a sonic tapestry, it's nearly impossible to escape the multi-threaded layers & moods once you start the music. Fell's bass work clearly provides the foundation layers, with Wastell & Davies adding the dancing shadows and light to provide a most enchanting aural vision that even the novice listener can enjoy. As you might imagine, I've "seen" many of these aural works over the last 30 years of improvised music... this stands out as an experience that will become an "instant improvised classic"! Impressive enough to rate a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from this reviewer. If you're looking for something to educate the unenlightened with, GET this CD. **Rotcod Zzaj**

Bruce's Fingers
24 Chantry Road
Haverhill CB9 8BE
UK

Both Kinds of Music

CD

Misha Feigin with
Elliot Sharp on dobro, **Davey Williams** - electric guitar, **Craig Hultgren** - cello, **LaDonna Smith** - violin, and **Eugene Chadbourne** - banjo, guitar

This latest release by Misha Feigin is a compilation CD of high-spirited acoustic duets. Feigin is well known for his singing, classical/folk guitar style, and Russian balalaika playing. In each cut, he combines with the participating partners to create a very beautifully balanced collection of improvisations. Moscow born, virtuoso guitarist and singer, he demonstrates his own musical sensitivity and lyricism while mirroring and interacting within the styles of his collaborators without losing his own special style.

Sometimes introspective, sometimes romantic, and even though sometimes lively and schizophrenic (with Eugene Chadbourne), a palatable and vibrant character emerges throughout. Check it out!

-Chaz Currier

Produced by Leo Records Laboratory. <http://www.atlas.co.uk/leorecords/>

Contact: Misha Feigin
221 North Clifton Ave. Apt 31
Louisville, Ky 40206

Ut Gret

Recent Fossils

with, Greg Acker, Joee Conroy, Steve Good, Gary Pahler, Joseph Getter, Mark Englert, Bob Douglas, Steve Roberts, David Stilley, Sam Gray, Keenan Lawler Tom Butsch, Misha Feigin, Andy Rademaker, Henry Kaiser, Davey Williams, Eugene Chadbourne, Greg Goodman, Doug Carrol, Dean Zigoris, Jay Lyons, Marko Novachcoff, Paul Lovens, Todd Hildreth, Mark Bradlyn, Mike Heffley, Peter Hadley

This is a big kahuna for the Grets, maybe even a major opus, a 25th anniversary 3-cd set. They've always been good at pulling rabbits out of hats, but I never expected gamelan to be one of them. The whole first disc is a contemporary Indonesian/western gamelan piece made up of 18 sections which tend to get more Western toward the end before they end up more Javanese than anything. It's largely a pleasing, even challenging experience, both restful and energetic. Very seldom does it sound quite like anything I've heard before, and I've heard a great deal of gamelan. It has a bit of humdrum in tracks 16 and 17, but it almost continually surprised me, not a small feat.

Speaking of gamelan, there's a performance of "In C" by Terry Riley, that gamelan offspring, which takes up Disc 3. A smoothly chugging, sax-colored performance, it's a treat and a half.

Disc 3's "Time Lapse" gives some idea of what an improv-ready Lou Harrison might have been like with its pan-Asian slippery stateliness. "Foreplay" first camps up soundtrack miasma, but later unfortunately succumbs to the bog of it

all. "Music To Die By," an elegiac marvel, could also make a good testament to being alive.

The Grets have done themselves proud here and this a good way to sample their eclecticism and daring.

Ear X-tacy records

EARXTC@aol.com

Richard Grooms

Scala

The Navigators

Beatrix Ward-Fernandez- violin, theremin, wood

Charles Collins- vibraphone, lamellophones, metal

John Jasnach- 12-string gtr., ud, ukulele, frame drum

The trebly nature of this unusual combination of instruments, added to the childlike exploratory nature of the performers, makes for afresh, off-center and very engaging take on free music. Very enjoyable and recommended to those who don't think improv should be sturm und drang all the time.

Found Property Records

007

www.foundpropetyrecordings.com

Richard Grooms

We Are

Emily Hay / Marcus Fernandos

Hay-voice, flute, piccolo, piano, electronics

Fernandos-perc., field recordings, electronics

Lisle Ellis-bass, electronics

Ellen Weller-sax, flute

Al Scholl-guitar

If all Emily Hay did was sing, she'd be plenty impressive. That she can do so very much with reeds is gravy aplenty. And there's more to come, as they say. Three people are listed here as doing electronics and since they overlap so much I can't tell them apart. They are all marvelous at what they do, however. This is a record full of mysterious calls and silence, highly evocative textures and very assured playing throughout. Hay and Fernandos have chosen their partners well, and the whole shebang is testament to the wisdom of releasing the goods from the unconscious. Very high marks for every track here.

Public Eyesore

PECD 97

www.publiceyesore.com

Richard Grooms

Bremen To Bridgewater

Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath

The Britcrits went gaga over this one and well they should have. Live 1971 and 1975 top drawer British jazz avant players (Elton Dean, Mongezi Feza, Louis Moholo, Evan Parker, Dudu Pukwana, McGregor and 11 others) are at their energized peak here. This is an absolute mother lode of white hot jazz. Do not let it slip by. Please do not. I thank you.

Cuneiform/Rune 182/183

<cuneiformrecords.com>

Richard Grooms

A Temperament For Angels

Michael Jon Fink

Robin Lorentz- violins

Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick- cellos

Jonathan Marmor & Fink- cymbals

Fink- sampler keyboards

Start with mists of sound which are mostly acoustic but which have a slight electronic ambience. Hone all this down for maximum plaintive impact. Add harmonic richness

with subtle gradations and clear detail. It reminds me a little of bowed piano playing but with more somber moods than you usually find there. A Rilke poem in the liner notes has this to say about what this cd is getting at: "...beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror..." The music here does indicate the combination of beauty and terror that angels have, but the landscape this cd occupies is more the place where angels are on the horizon, before the point of actual contact with humans. All of this may not sound so mystical if you play this record. It is an awe-inspiring effort.

Cold Blue

CB 0017

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Adams/Cox/Fink/Fox

Marty Walker- clarinet, bass clarinet

Amy Knoles- vibes and marimba

Bryan Pezzone- piano

Maria Newman and Peter Kent- violins

Valerie Dimond- viola

Here are compositions by the composers in the title above-John Luther Adams, Rick Cox, Michael Jon Fink and Jim Fox-and brief interludes by Marty Walker. "Dark Wind", the lead piece by Adams, is altogether too static and somber for me, the first time this composer hasn't dazzled me. Fink's "Thread of Summer" is an articulate, contemplative work that puts forth a rich autumnal half-light. Cox's piece doesn't stand out from tenure-oriented academic composition. He is, like Adams, capable of very much more. Fox's gentle "Between the Wheels" shows that strings can create a hovering, birdlike atmosphere. It would have benefited from being a little shorter, but it's a success.

Cold Blue Music

CB 0009

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Shell Of Certainty

Steve Franklin (keyboards), **Tim Crowther** (guitar and guitar synth), **Tony Marsh** (drums).

Improvised electric music. These guys credentials look like a who's who of 'jazz-rock', or what we used to call 'prog-rock' back in the day. And sound-wise at least, that's what it calls to my mind. Memories of Crimso and the Softs, National Heath et al, kept recurring as I listened to this. But that's just the SOUND of it. The structures are all improvised, so there's not a lot of unison riffing or odd-meter time signatures. Instead we get tasteful use of effects and much interplay, the keyboards at times acting as backing for guitar forays, at others engaged in call and response, or setting a general mood.

"Council Of All Being" sets out to be a vehicle for Crowther's guitar in a no-key-or tone-center solo, with Franklin doing an excellent job of following along (or maybe, going there with!). Eventually the keys take over

and the guitar synth backs up, and it's all stop/start staccato notes and drumming...until the big sweeping washes of chords come in and we're back to guitar space. At least I think that's what I'm hearing. It's hard to tell sometimes.

"Tremors" starts quieter and quicker, with more staccato, and definitely recognizable strings and keys. These gents are listening well to each other, with no one really taking over for any period of time. Eventually this tune turns to call and response-type textures the drummer alternating between filling in the holes and palying along with one or the other instrument.

"Arboreal" is more ethereal sounding, washes of echoed chords and pinging cymbals. Overall I'd recommend this to fans of the above mentioned bands, or anyone interested in listening to players that listen.

jeph jerman

Visionlogic
P.O.Box 24365
London SW17 9FG
U.K.
email: tim@visionlogic.demon.co.uk
www.visionlogic.demon.co.uk

distributed is the US by Wayside

Fade

Rick Cox

Rick Cox-electric guitar

Thomas Freeman - bass, signal processors

If ECM is “the most beautiful sound next to silence” then Cold Blue, which has ECM DNA (but which isn’t jazz and not quite ECM New Series) is maybe the most austere sound next to silence. This cd single by Cox starts with floating, enshrouding electronics that almost makes you feel as if you’re leaving this world behind. That isn’t necessarily a good feeling but it’s certainly an intriguing one. One thinks of Tibetan bardo, exile-even death-but none of those states quite gets at what’s happening here. Think of Eno’s 70’s and 80’s slow-moving bits but think more substance and richness. If this sounds snooze-worthy, it’s not by a long shot. Actually, it’s oddly comforting, a place where the worst has already happened and a resounding calm has set in. I recommend it without hesitation.

Cold Blue

CB 0020

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Sonic Calligraphy

Peggy Chew- vocals

Adrian Frey- piano

Chew and Frey combine traditional American jazz, Latin jazz, and traditional Chinese songs for a generally spirited and buoyant session. At times the improvising is too conventional and safe (this is more true of Frey than Chew- Frey’s playing occasionally shows evidence of supper club jazz) but there’s much more success here than dross. If the idea of these crosscurrents appeals to you, by all means give this a listen. When it clicks, it does so beautifully.

Altisuoni

www.altisuoni.com

Richard Grooms

Bedouin Hornbook

Rich West

pfMentum CD 016

Chris Heenan- bass clarinet

Bruce Friedman- trumpet

Jeremy Drake- elec. gtr.

Scot Ray- tuba

Rich West- drums

Like nothing I've ever heard before from free jazz players: that's what the first parts sound like. Considering how some free jazz-related material can tend toward sameness, that's saying something. Cut three ("Twang"), however, conjures up something very different: Australian aborigine dijeridoo players playing along with Tibetan monks who are doing low register vocal drones (it works very well). It's astonishing that the folks here can get these sounds out of the above-listed instruments. This track transitions nicely into a spirited romp and that somehow works, too. I wished for even more of the drone mode; it was a truly amazing groove. This group has a talent for consistently making very unexpected sounds from conventional instruments. I wish they'd showed even more of that here, but to do as much as they have is remarkable. They sound a little like the Art Ensemble of Chicago, only contorted. Usually this works (as on "Furcifer"), less often not. If the Art Ensemble is once removed from the jazz mainstream, these folks are twice removed. So to call them jazz

at all is iffy. And they deserve kudos (or horned bucks) for getting all that right.

pfMentum
P.O. Box 1653
Ventura, Calif.
93002

Richard Grooms

LEG END

CD

Henry Cow

Geoff Leigh, reeds & vox, **Tim Hodgkinson**, keys, alto sax, clarinet, vox **John Greaves**, bass, piano, whistle, vox **Fred Frith**, guitars, violin, viola, vox **Chris Cutler**, drums, toys, piano, whistle, vox

I had listened to an old, OLD Henry Cow many years back & only remember an impression of "dirge", somehow. This CD starts off with (what sounds like) an homage to "Jazz From Hell", titled "Nirvana For Mice". Absolutely LOVED it... big-band rodent regalia! Touches of "smooth improv" on cut 2. There are some amazing vocal stretches on the last track, "Nine Funerals of the Citizen King", in a very orchestral meandering through modern rock-op. In the overall, this is a very interesting listen, certainly qualifying as a challenging listen. Some excellent guitar works (especially on track 6) & flow. Energy levels weren't quite what I anticipated, ergo a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED rating. Those in love with listening through an entire CD for the intricate nuances at one sitting will find it very enjoyable.

-Rotcod Zzaj

MEGACORP

79 Beulah Rd., Thornton Heath

Surrey CR7 8UG

UK

Friends and Enemies

Fred Frith (electric and acoustic guitars, 4 & 6 string basses, 'drums', violin, marimba, piano, casio 202 organ)

Henry Kaiser (electric and acoustic guitars, 6 string bass, 'drums', electric sitar, banjo, piano)

Oliver DiCicco (engineering)

Here we have a re-release of Frith and Kaiser's two wonderful records "**With Friends Like These**" from 1979 and "**Who Needs Enemies**" from 1983, both on the now defunct Metalanguage label, plus an entire unreleased live album from 1984 AND 6 new tracks recorded in 1999 specially for this two cd set. Now I can finally throw away that old analog cassette of these records that I've been praying wouldn't disintegrate entirely.

The cds are broken up so that each gives you a side from each record, plus two or three new tracks. A little history lesson in each. I have a long history with these records, "With Friends Like These" being one of the first all-improv records I ever heard. It's a noisy/ joyful stomping romp through the world of out guitar playing. The second album is a little more *structured* (for lack of a better term) and has a couple of scary acoustic blues numbers on it. The drum machines wear a little thin with me, but hey, I'm a drummer! The live stuff is more akin to the second record, but still wonderful for having never been heard. And the new tracks make it seem like these two still play together often.

If you play guitar, and Improvise, and you've never heard these records, I suggest you find this set of discs and dig in. If you have heard them, but don't own them, here's an easy way to obtain them without having to pay record-collector prices for them.

Kudos to Cuneiform for making this available. Now if only someone would re-release "Getting A Head", I'd be in heaven.

-jeph jerman

Cuneiform Records

P.O.Box 8427

Silver Spring MD 20907-8427

<http://members.aol.com/Cuneiform2/cuneiform.ht>

Two Gentlemen In Verona

Fred Frith (electrified guitars, voice, jetsam)

Chris Cutler (drums, electrified drums flotsam)

The very beginning sounds for all the world like thunder, to which is soon added a wavering electronic wobble and stretchy guitar....they're back. If you've heard either of the other two live discs by these two, you'll probably still be surprised. I was. Much more vocalizing from Fred this time out. And Cutler seems to lean heavily on the electrified end of his kit. If you've not heard these venerable old men yet, I suggest you take heed and prepare to have your ears pricked repeatedly. They run the gamut of string and skin and circuit w/o ever sounding like anyone else. Or maybe sounding like EVERYONE else all at once. Even bits of song-form appear and slink back into the mist about their knees. Sometimes it's hard to believe that this is just two people.

T'would that I could witness them in the flesh some day, I could die a happy man.

-jeph jerman

ReR Megacorp
79 Beulah Rd.
Thornton Heath, Surrey
CR7 8JG UK
megacorp@dial.pipex.com
www.megacorp.u-net.com

US distributor: Cuneiform
PO Box 8427
Silver Spring MD 20907

Japan distributor: Locus Solus
3-18-8 Naka-Ochiai
Shinjuku, Tokyo 161-0032
Japan

Keep The Dog

Fred Frith

Fred Frith- gtr., bass, violin, voice

Jean Derome- alto, bari sax

Charles Hayward- drums, voice

Rene Lussier- gtr., bass

Bob Ostertag- sampler

Zeena Parkins- accordion, harp, piano, voice

I like noisy music, disconnected music, trainwreck music, blenderized music and all manner of discordant music. But I don't like this record save for the closer "Domaine." Most of this, like its near-contemporary *Speechless*, hasn't aged well. But if you're a partisan of the above bents (and, darlings, you know that you are), please check out the sound samples. You may violently disagree with me.

ReR/FRA 03

www.fredfrith.com

Richard Grooms

Speechless

Fred Frith

Cuts 1-5:

Frith- gtr., violin, mellotron, bass, organ, voice

Guigou Chenevier- drums, tenor sax, voice

Margot Mathieu- soprano and tenor saxes, voice

Ferdinand Richard- bass, guimbarde, voice

Jo Thirion- organ, harmonium

Cuts 6-13:

Frith- gtr., violin, keybs., bass, drums, voice

Bill Laswell- bass

Fred Maher- drums

Not all that Eighties frenetic music has held up as this re-release shows. The first group here offers full-bore category Cuisinarting. Though it's sometimes delightfully energizing ("Kick the Can", "Carnival on Wall Street"), it can sometimes be eclectically show-offy ("Laughing Matter", "Woman Speak to Men") in a Zorn way. Too much of the second group is just plain enervating. Throughout, Frith is tremendous when he's lyrical but he provides frustratingly little of that here. The last two tracks are gems and prove that he's capable of small miracles. He's plain captivating when he's not trying to prove anything, not trying to multitask all the time.

For the Frith faithful only.

ReR/ FRO 04

www.fredfrith.com

Richard Grooms

Greg Foster & Joel Futterman - “Alabama”

Greg Foster - Poetry

Joel Futterman - Piano, curved soprano saxophone and flute

“At the center of this group of compositions stands “Alabama Exequy,” a long poem whose theme gives title to the whole work. The poem enacts a ritual grief: shock, anguish, fury, the vision of justice, and the hope of peace.” It regards the ever continuing problem of racism. The remaining pieces on this release brings to the listener a melancholic drama which is accentuated by the crescendo and silencing of the piano and other instruments played by Futterman.

Foster, a poet since the ‘60s, has worked with the likes of Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, etc. His beat poetry has been compared to that of Jack Kerouac with a razor sharp edge. Joel Futterman has performed with noted jazz names such as Jimmy Lyons, Roland Kirk, etc. Foster prefers performing live, feeling akin with the improvisational nature of jazz - this recording is the first time Foster’s poetry has been captured beyond the confines of the stage. - Robin Taylor

Drimala Records
P.O. Box 69044
Hampton, VA 23669-9344 USA
Fax: 757.722.3898
Voice: 757.722.1154
www.drimala.com

Nikolai Galen

Stemme 8

Galen- vocals

Istanbul-based Galen recorded these extended vocals in Oslo and it’s a marvel. 35 short pieces of inspired work, it reminds me of listening to Meredith Monk’s *Dolmen Music* for the first time. In other words, it’s ear-opening and some of the best in this niche ever recorded. Not exactly like Monk’s work because it’s not composed (at least as far as I can tell). Moans, wails, wavery speech, lamentations, screams, ruminations, purgations,

overtone singing-it's a heady collection, and not for the faint of heart. It's astonishing, ground-breaking and fearless, too. I can't identify for sure any of the languages he sometimes sings in and I don't want to, it would only spoil the mystery. It's finally more outré than Monk, more varied than Diamanda Galas. Impeccably recorded with plenty of echo where it counts, just at the times when it needs extra dramatic punch. One of the most arresting cd's I've ever reviewed.

www.voiceofshade.net

Richard Grooms

String Quartets

Peter Garland- composer

Gordon Mackay and Hilary Sturt- violins

Bridget Carey- viola

Anton Lukoszevieve- cello

“String Quartet 1”: Kyle Gann is right when he says Garland's music never quite resolves. But then if you hear how elegant and dignified it is, you'd see why it has to hang in the air. Plainly American yet shot through with Far Eastern stateliness and a meditative character. This description brings Lou Harrison to mind, but Garland is happily independent. The piece is beautifully stoical.

The “String Quartet 2” is a modernist lullaby, yearning for something but never grasping it. It would perfectly accompany staring out the window at rain. It’s not humdrum, however, and it’s clearly endearing.

Garland is someone worth paying attention to. This cd has made me emotionally richer.

Cold Blue

CB 0031

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Unquenchable Fire

Deep Listening Band / Joe McPhee Quartet

Deep Listening Band:

Pauline Oliveros- accordion

Stuart Dempster- trombone, didjeridu

David Gamper- keyboards, flutes, electronics

Joe McPhee Quartet

McPhee- sop. sax, alto clarinet, Casio digital horn

Joe Giardullo- flutes, bass clarinet

Monica Wilson- cello

Karen Jurgens- drums

This is a departure for the Deep Listening Band. For one, they play along with a jazz quartet, in this case one who mines free jazz fields quite well. Two, the DLB is much less meditative and introspective than usual, taking on bizarre tonalities and noise the like of which I've never heard before from them or anyone else. And there is some text read (not much, and not over the music, which was the right decision). Gamper's electronics is the most unfamiliar sound in this mix. He can coax gentleness and impishness out of his array and this is fascinating. Oliveros provides her usual sublime atmospheric accordion clouds, full of drams. The two groups work very well together and this is fitting as free jazz has always been one of the DeepListening Band's ancestors.

DL 19-2003

www.deeplistening.org

Richard Grooms

Mommy Row

Philip Gayle- acoustic gtrs., gong, wineglasses, toy piano, etc.

Philip Gayle is refreshingly good at avoiding free improv clichés. But it's not so much what he avoids as what he includes that's important here. "Zoomly Zoomly" features a nervous bunch of scratching, wheedling and buzzing instruments anchored by a regularly recurring gong, suggesting a ritual orchestra from a non-Earth yet humanlike society- without a trace of hokeyness. Such a wide variety of unusual instrumental combinations are used on these tracks that it would be nice to know what you're listening to on each cut, but I know improv records are shoestring ops so I can hardly single this one out. The guitaristics are reminiscent of Derek Bailey, but don't have the over-random, desiccated sound that musician too often supplies. Eugene Chadbourne might be a better comparison, as the playing here is highly spirited and quirky. But there's more here you can hang onto than you can with Chadbourne. Call it structured anarchy? It may seem unrealizable, but Gayle pulls it off again and again. There's more fresh musical ritual, plain enchantment and surprise here than you normally get in free music. The crystal clear recording only adds to the high worth of this recording.

Family Vineyard

FV 38 CD

www.family-vineyard.com

Richard Grooms

Purple Wind

Philip Gelb- shakuhachi, electronics

Gino Robair- perc., toy horns, rubble

Miyo Masaoka- koto

Dana Reason- piano

Shaking Ray Levis:

Dennis Palmer- electronics

Bob Stagner- electronics

There are back recesses of the mind you thought were unreachable, that went away when you woke up. If you did recollect anything of them it's frustratingly fragmentary. Somehow these folks dove in and brought back the goods and had the musical ability to present it all and wrestle with too without pretense or self-indulgence. Doesn't seem easy, but they brought 'em back alive.

Ryokan Recordings

Ryokan 1

Review of a visit to Toronto: Improv meeting at Victory Restaurant Tuesday Sept 5, 2000

Kurt Newman- solo guitar

From sparse introductions converging into interesting personal tonalities and languaging for guitar, electric frazzles transforming sound in a slow rise of intensity, cry baby gets a new meaning. Coaxing an expression dry and fragile as rare mosses (music) growing on a riverbank, speaking silently as the wilderness night sounds. From a hollow bodied electric, **Kurt Newman** coaxes a variety of sounds in hammering, stroking, rubbing, fingerings and placements, creating a contrapuntal deluge of simultaneous musical noise, harmonics, and sound events. One of the most interesting new stylists I've heard in a long time.

John Oswald-alto saxophone, Allison Cameron-assorted things, Mike Genera-drums

Splashes of percussion, understated saxophone, contact mics on enigmatic objects, and exploring the territory gradually. Genera was extremely interesting to watch. His actions were very alert almost like he was about to bust forth with energy, always poised for the next attack. It was the point of poise that I found so captivating, although his accents and punctuation were varietal and well placed. Contrast that with the enormous understatement of Oswald and Cameron-- John with a tee shirt stuffed down the bell of the horn, Cameron leaning intently over the two boxes and processor, as she fiddled with a contact mic on the table, providing a subtle background of white noise. Layer that with Oswald's deceptive vocal

feedback through the horn. The music reminded me of the biological level, elements of heat, atomic particles swarming around a center, a nucleus, noticeably responsive and alive.

LaDonna Smith, yes, that was me, too tranced out to remember anything other than playing **solo viola**, and in trio with **Angelique von Berlo-accordion** and **John Oswald-alto saxophone** wrapping up the gig, in a sonority discussion that culminated in a rousing groove.

LS

ISM

Frode Gjerstad (alto sax)

Mostly short saxophone solos by this unknown to me Norwegian improviser. Usually starting with simple motifs and then modifying and distorting the basic alto sax sound in various ways-more or less breath, overblowing, multiphonics, 'sour' notes- he never seems to stay with one technique for long. There are however unifying ideas within each piece, and the sound is what ties them together as musical structures, not theme and motivic development.

So, for instance, in a piece like 'Talkism', we're given many of the various ways in which an alto sax can be made to scream; straight overblowing, biting the reed, squeally harmonics- a set of 'scream demos' maybe.

Gjerstad's notes for the disc include the admission that, "...the element of surprise is very important for me when I do solo pieces." Indeed, it often

sounds to me like he himself is surprised by what's coming out of his horn,
and maybe that's the idea.

-jeph jerman

Circulazione Totale
Gandsveien 15
4017 Stavanger, Norway
email: fgjersta@online.no

"Double Jeu Trio featuring Michel Godard"

Francois Chevrolet: Alto Saxophone
Michel Godard: Tuba
Christian Graf: Guitar
Bernard Trontin: Percussion, samples

The idea of musical fusions has always seemed to have appeal to the composition-minded. There is something intellectually appealing about the experiment of welding different kinds of music into various sonic Rube Goldberg devices. However, it is less clear whether all of the musical greats, to whom the F-word is applied, actually set out consciously toward this composer's goal. King Crimson, Captain Beefheart, Bill Frisell come to mind as creators of some timeless "fusions" (if we must) that somehow lack the self-consciousness of others in the same CD bin.

Although this CD is more rewarding than many other hybrids, I must report that it has a sizable helping of that self-consciousness that pervades fusion. The back story, according to liner notes, seems to be of a group of active individual Continental musicians who variously work in jazz, free jazz, classical avant-garde, rock, and so on. They bring these disparate influences to bear on the compositions of Francois Chevrolet, and the DJT is born.

Don't celebrate yet. The self-consciousness is mainly in the fact that the compositions are overly modular. They do not move through the different sections very smoothly, perhaps because the transitions tend to be quite awkward--now we do the funkier staccato stuff, now the more open "free" stuff, now the *mysterioso* atonal heads, and so on. While this approach makes for a listening experience on the seat's edge, what it *does not* do is reward repeated listenings. By the middle of the second listen to the disc, my mind completely wandered, and I found some of the patchwork quality annoying.

The compositions themselves are most analogous to much of the early- to mid-eighties music from New York's Downtown scene. The tuba and the lilting minor and atonal lines make a comparison to Bobby Previte's work tough to avoid. The more energetic stuff, and and the inclusion of a guitar share qualities with Wayne Horvitz' President,

although Graf tends to sound more like Joe Baiza of Universal Congress Of than Bill Frisell.

One problem of most of the compositions is that the main themes are often played by the guitar and alto in unison. Chevrolet has a dark, restrained approach as it is--closer to Paul Desmond than John Zorn--and so most of the lines have this thin, pinched quality that weakens them. This seems to add to the sense of hesitancy and self-consciousness.

I do not want to leave the impression that this CD is worse than it is. The musicians here are all very competent, and as I implied above, the first listening of the disc kept me wondering whether something great was just a few bars away. As is often the case with fusion, this stuff might have been geared to expanding the gigging possibilities of the musician. It would be offensive neither in rock clubs nor jazz clubs, and make for a decent evening out in either venue. Trouble is, that's just not good enough to guarantee that the audience members will ever want to see them *again*.

-Wyman Brantley

Circular Logic

Music for Woodwinds

Steve Adams (Sopranino, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, C, alto and bass flutes),
Vinny Golia (Sopranino, baritone and bass saxophones, english horn, bassoon, piccolo, C, alto and bass flutes, eb, Bb, A, alto, bass, contra-alto and contrabass clarinets)

The first couple of pieces sound like rather polite chamber works for small (tiny) group. The third starts with a blast of dissonance (yeah!) and continues into multi-tracked reed euphoria, w/soprano, alto, tenor, and bass saxes all weaving around each other. This must've been a hoot to record. Throughout the rest of the disc these two veterans try out various combinations of their individual arsenals, with interesting results. The quartet for two C and two bass flutes is really gorgeous. I don't believe I've ever heard a piccolo/baritone sax quartet before.

Diatribes Part 4 is a sopranino sax quartet, that reminds me quite a bit of Rova Saxophone Quartet. Not surprising, as it's one of Adams' compositions. Starting with unison held notes, the various layers peel off and go in different directions.

On the whole a good sampling of music from these two, and it makes me want to hear more from each of them. Maybe a trio of horn/bass/percussion from each?

-jeph jerman

9 Winds
P.O. Box 10082
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
<http://members.aol.com/ninewinds>

Duets

Susan Allen harp,

Vinny Golia piccolo, C, alto & bass flutes, strich, Bb & bass clarinets, soprano saxophone & contrabassoon

A bass clarinet flourish and they're off! Harp and horns seem like an unlikely pairing, but then again, maybe it's just because I'd never heard it before. This disc slips in and out of classical sounding stretches, quick, stop-on-a-dime-and-turn forays and weird otherwordly soundtrack music. It rarely goes way way out though, something that I find I crave often these days. I guess after days of listening to nothing but wind and rain and bird sounds, tonal music seems a bit odd.

jeph jerman

9Winds
PO Box 10082
Beverly Hills CA 90213
[members @aol.com/ninewinds/](mailto:members@aol.com/ninewinds/)

Trignition

Barre Phillips (contrabass),

Bertram Turetzky (contrabass),

Vinny Golia (Eb, Bb, bass & contra-bass clarinets, soprano & baritone saxophones, suonas)

Very solid landscapes conjured up by these three. Follow the leader, or we're all the leader, or...some space for short solos and much attentive listening. Some attempts at inventing lines or themes are circumvented, to good results. Storytime in the nursery or a dark tale around the campfire, it's the same story to the trio. The parts I like the most don't go on long enough and leave me waiting through the sing-songy stuff to get to more ear-pulling. That's just me though, and when I remind myself that I should maybe just listen, I enjoy it all. The singers, the song and the sounds that they are sounding.

jeph jerman

9Winds
PO Box 10082
Beverly Hills CA 90213
members@aol.com/ninewinds/

Live @ Banlieues Bleues

**Joelle Leandre (bass),
Francois Houle (reeds),
George Graewe (piano).**

A live recording by three of the heavier weights in Europe. Love it when people listen. Lots of space is accorded any new idea that springs up, and they constantly do. Emphasis shifts continuously from breath to vibrating strings and then to hammered string set. Sometimes I wish for a drummer, but then I remember to listen.

'Halos' is all harmonics...'From Limbo' starts with crunching and squeaking bass strings with quick runs and clusters from the piano. A crack and back to work, wait...go...wait...stuttering reed and pizzicato high strings...squeak scream...all unfolding like a story, which is how, I'm told, music is supposed to be.

'Aizi' definitely sounds like classical piano music. Or the way Cecil Taylor's dance slips between the cracks, Houle swinging around on a rope above the keyboard. It often sounds like these three are reading each others minds. Or a chart!

'Demonique' enters as it should, like a demon, or as much like one as piano, bass and clarinet can sound. Slips down a little, but keeps fighting... and then it's over. KNow the demons name and you control him.

A well recorded set of inspiring music. Nothing earth shattering, but then again, what is anymore?

jeph jerman

"Double Jeu Trio featuring Michel Godard"

Francois Chevrolet: Alto Saxophone

Michel Godard: Tuba

Christian Graf: Guitar

Bernard Trontin: Percussion, samples

The idea of musical fusions has always seemed to have appeal to the composition-minded. There is something intellectually appealing about the experiment of welding different kinds of music into various sonic Rube Goldberg devices. However, it is less clear whether all of the musical greats, to whom the F-word is applied, actually set out consciously toward this composer's goal. King Crimson, Captain Beefheart, Bill Frisell come to mind as creators of some timeless "fusions" (if we must) that somehow lack the self-consciousness of others in the same CD bin.

Although this CD is more rewarding than many other hybrids, I must report that it has a sizable helping of that self-consciousness that pervades fusion. The back story, according to liner notes, seems to be of a group of active individual Continental musicians who variously work in jazz, free jazz, classical avant-garde, rock, and so on. They bring these disparate influences to bear on the compositions of Francois Chevrolet, and the DJT is born.

Don't celebrate yet. The self-consciousness is mainly in the fact that the compositions are overly modular. They do not move through the different sections very smoothly, perhaps because the transitions tend to be quite awkward--now we do the funkier staccato stuff, now the more open "free" stuff, now the *mysterioso* atonal heads, and so on. While this approach makes for a listening experience on the seat's edge, what it *does not* do is reward repeated listenings. By the middle of the second listen to the disc, my mind completely wandered, and I found some of the patchwork quality annoying.

The compositions themselves are most analogous to much of the early- to mid-eighties music from New York's Downtown scene. The tuba and the lilting minor and atonal lines make a comparison to Bobby Previte's work tough to avoid. The more energetic stuff, and and the inclusion of a guitar share qualities with Wayne Horvitz' President, although Graf tends to sound more like Joe Baiza of Universal Congress Of than Bill Frisell.

One problem of most of the compositions is that the main themes are often played by the guitar and alto in unison. Chevrolet has a dark, restrained approach as it is--closer to Paul Desmond than John Zorn--and so most of the lines have this thin, pinched quality that weakens them. This seems to add to the sense of hesitancy and self-consciousness.

I do not want to leave the impression that this CD is worse than it is. The musicians here are all very competent, and as I implied above, the first listening of the disc kept me wondering whether something great was just a few bars away. As is often the case with fusion, this stuff might have been geared to expanding the gigging possibilities of the musician. It would be offensive neither in rock clubs nor jazz clubs, and make for a decent evening out in either venue. Trouble is, that's just not good enough to guarantee that the audience members will ever want to see them *again*.

-Wyman Brantley

contact: Francois Chevrolet
16, 16, av. Jules Crosnier
CH-1206 Geneve
www.fusions.ch/doublejeu

LEG END

CD

Henry Cow

Geoff Leigh, reeds & vox, **Tim Hodgkinson**, keys, alto sax, clarinet, vox **John Greaves**, bass, piano, whistle, vox **Fred Frith**, guitars, violin, viola, vox **Chris Cutler**, drums, toys, piano, whistle, vox

I had listened to an old, OLD Henry Cow many years back & only remember an impression of "dirge", somehow. This CD starts off with (what sounds like) an homage to "Jazz From Hell", titled "Nirvana For Mice". Absolutely LOVED it... big-band rodent regalia! Touches of "smooth improv" on cut 2. There are some amazing vocal stretches on the last track, "Nine Funerals of the Citizen King", in a very orchestral meandering through modern rock-op. In the overall, this is a very interesting listen, certainly qualifying as a challenging listen. Some excellent guitar works (especially on track 6) & flow. Energy levels weren't quite what I anticipated, ergo a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED rating. Those in love with listening through an entire CD for the intricate nuances at one sitting will find it very enjoyable.

-Rotcod Zzaj

MEGACORP

79 Beulah Rd., Thornton Heath

Surrey CR7 8UG

UK

HANGMAN'S HILL

CD

*Peter Blegvad with John Greaves
& Chris Cutler*

Peter Blegvad, guitar, vox, clarinet
John Greaves, bass, keyboards **Chris Cutler**, drums
& a buncha' other folk

You'd havta' be SMOKIN' th' mirrors to make the music on this CD be considered as improv. Electric folk-rock, without doubt. For those who were enchanted by Dylan's first round with electric guitars, this will bring back distinctly fond memories. There are some riffs where (if you REALLY stretched yer' imagination) ya' might consider there was an element of jazz to it, but improvised it's not. That dinna' render it unlistenable for me, though... some great lyrics, creative arrangements, even a hint of the psychedelic... & a nice rawkin' beat most all th' way through. If ya' need some great road music, GET this - but if your bent is for "bent", move on down th' line.
Rotcod Zzaj

ReR Megacorp
79 Beulah Road
Thornton Heath
Surrey CR7 8 JG
UK

Frank Gratkowski Trio:

"Gestalten"

Frank Gratkowski: Alto Sax, Bass Clarinet

Dieter Manderscheid: Bass

Gerry Hemingway: Percussion

I was *very* pleasantly surprised to hear this CD. I had seen Gratkowski live back in 1997. He was playing in, I believe, a duo with Fred Van Hove in Chicago. For some reason the set seemed an absolute bore, and so I wrote off Gratkowski that night as being more than an also-ran.

Turns out that Gratkowski must have been honing his craft since then--there's no way I could have overlooked that night the kind of exciting originality Gratkowski displays here. Hemingway and Manderscheid undoubtedly aid the quality, but Gratkowski has clearly earned his own eponymous trio.

As an alto player, Gratkowski currently uses two main modes of play. The first owes much to the attack of the bowed strings, and the spiky pointillism of Serial compositions. Add the rhythm section, and--if I might venture a visual analogy--the effect is like watching a slowly revolving crystalline mobile, hanging above a hoard of frogs snapping at flies. A nice bit of contrast and balance. Marcus Muller's liner notes make much of a Braxton comparison, and I can see how one might be reminded of Braxton when Gratkowski is in this mode. But Braxton's work has a more manic, forceful quality about it. Gratkowski, in mode one, might be better likened to a volume-pedal-pumping Derek Bailey.

Mode Two is just a hoot. Someday someone should do an acoustical study of how it is that different alto players still manage to find their own noises to make on the horn. Gratkowski in mode two reveals an ear for the absurd, the comic, without (importantly) a feel of smugness. He *means* it, and he brings an original voice to it.

As if that weren't enough, Gratkowski is a quite accomplished bass clarinet player. Too many free players want to make the bass clarinet into something it isn't--David Murray, for example, seems to merely transfer his tenor sax moves to it. At his best, Gratkowski promises to set a new standard on the instrument. Sure, it still has some of the familiar lugubriousness in places, making one wonder whether it was the best overall choice for a lead horn. But when FG sets his creativity to it, he again reveals his enviable ability to find new sounds and new chops that are guaranteed to surprise.

Hemingway and Manderscheid are nicely paired as a rhythm section. Hemingway's talents are undoubtedly familiar to most experienced listeners--here he employs his engaging kitchen sink slow burn to up the tension-release capabilities of the trio. He only seems out of place when he goes bombastic. Gratkowski is not exactly shooting for the Ayleresque, and Hemingway tries to push him there a couple of times. Manderscheid, though less well known, is well positioned, since his playing is scarcely less pointillistic than Hemingway's. Particularly nice is how he varies both timbre and attack. The sudden pops and click spring out of the mix and shift the focus of attention, and tension, at just the right times.

I suppose none of us should be judged by a single night live. I just hope that when I get to see Frank again, it will be with *this* trio!

- Wyman Brantley

**Contact: JazzHausMusik
Vebloer Str. 40
50672 Koln
Germany**

Torque

Brian Groder

Groder- trumpet, flugelhorn

Sam Rivers- flute, saxes

Doug Mathews- bass

Anthony Cole- drums

Very good if not mind-blowing modernistic jazz. Not really anything that couldn't have been done 40 years ago, so it's maybe best to say it's modern-classical jazz. Groder is quite good, Mathews and Cole never lost touch, but it's Rivers who shines the most here even though he's not in the spotlight as much. Those like me who feel that mainstream jazz is in a rut may not be overwhelmed, but those who don't have that view will probably be very impressed indeed. In any case, Rivers is always worth listening to.

Latham Records

LATHAM 5106-2

Richard Grooms

TORPOR

CD

Morgan Guberman

Morgan Guberman, solo contrabass

I reviewed Morgan's first solo CD for contrabass last year (Hamadrayas Baboon), with great acclaim for those listeners who enjoy improvisation and compositions that take music a "step further". Listeners who must envelop themselves in pattern and familiarity will have a hard time with this. The title cut is a hoot, repetitive ah, ah, ah, ah over Morgan's strums. Cut 12, story, was a favorite for me, probably because it's rhythm based. Listening to this is a pleasure for me, since Guberman has an excellent sense of simple construction. I'm sure there is a tendency for solo bass players to want to "fill" everything up, make it sound more complex than it is... Morgan seems to approach it from a much calmer standpoint, no need to camouflage the sparse with tons of notes. That's much better for the creative listener, anyway, as those tones are still there for them to hear. Another FINE effort... hope to hear more from Morgan soon! Gets a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for any/all into adventurous music(s)!

-Rotcod Zzaj

Morgan Guberman
2424 E. 11th St.
Oakland, CA 94601
USA
hamadryas@earthlink.net

Mats Gustafsson and David Stackenas

Blues

Mats Gustafsson, bari sax; David Stackenas, guitar.

I refuse to join the countless other reviewers that have pondered what links this music to the American Blues People referenced in the track titles, or what doesn't! While fascinating grist for the thought mill, I'll defer to the participants on this who, still alive and active, can provide more concision and "authenticity" than I would ever attempt.

As it stands, these two veterans of gloriously whimsical improv have already made their statement, and it is loads of fun. In whatever context, they make the ensemble sound bigger through the huge arsenal of timbres they elicit from seemingly conventional instruments. Only sample the opening of "Rotten Herring Blues" to hear what sounds like Stackenas sandblasting a piano and Gustafsson unable to keep his motorcycle running smoothly. Yet, when the shrill overtones abate, and Gustafsson begins to emit some of his trademark overtones, the industroplatter takes on a sheen of eerie beauty. By contrast, "Bumblebee Blues" resembles nothing so much as a modified bowl of rice crispies, largely courtesy of Stackenas, who even manages to throw a couple old-fashioned blues licks in for good measure, but I'm not going there! Besides, that shouting from Gustafsson is far from a field holler, resembling more closely a bit of martial arts-induced exhortation.

Then, there is the disc's opening gesture, an extraordinary exploration of a fifth that slowly fragments into its component harmonics, those leading to related pitches as the two musicians simply breathe tones, exemplifying the weird synchronicities only improvised music can foster. It's one of many transcendental moments on a disc that is hilarious and gorgeous by turn, another jewel in Atavistic's crown.

Atavistic records:

www.atavistic.com

marc medwin

Samsingen

Anna-Kajsa Holmberg-vocals

Luca Serrapiglio-bass clarinet

Nicola Guazzaloca-vibes

Andred Serrapiglio-cello

Old Swedish folksongs given a very modern twist. The songs here will appeal to fans of Ale Moller of ECM fame or to any folkies who like strong new wine in

old bottles. This group, who at first sound trad, aren't in the end going to appeal to traditionalists. The songs still sound timeless, though, as all well-performed folksongs tend to. Just remember, Steeleye Span once sounded new, too.

AMNR 004

www.amiranirecords.com

Richard Grooms

below beyond above

Voice Crack

**Andy Guhl (cracked everyday electronics),
Norbert Moeslang (cracked everyday electronics)**

Swiss duo who play mostly invented devices constructed from cheap (?) electronic devices; toys, old circuits, radios...creating a severe yet oddly serene environment of crackles, beeps, loops of bumpy rhythms...this CD is pretty quiet compared to past works. These two often get lumped into the Noise camp, and to be fair, they've often collaborated with American wall-of-sound masters Borbetomagus, to make sprawling UR-symphonies, but here, things are almost pastoral. If this is a general trend for Voice Crack, I like it.

Separating it further from the 'noise as entertainment' aesthetic, this music is not just mashed together willy-nilly, but definitely sounds crafted, carved from piles of old parts. Moeslang-Guhl have discovered other uses for cast-off devices, and to prove the worth of said uses, they carefully add detail on detail to make their own sonic environments. I can't think of anything to compare this soundmaking to, though it may have correlates within the computer/electronic minimalist school that's become so popular in recent years. It just doesn't cost as much. Or sound as sterile.

There's an odd warmth here that causes me to re-listen, and I believe I'd do so even if I were not a big Voice Crack fan.

-jeph jerman

Uhlang Production
Steigerstr. 8
CH-9000 St. Gallen
Switzerland

Mats Gustafsson and David Stackenas

Blues

Mats Gustafsson, bari sax; David Stackenas, guitar.

I refuse to join the countless other reviewers that have pondered what links this music to the American Blues People referenced in the track titles, or what doesn't! While fascinating grist for the thought mill, I'll defer to the participants on this who, still alive and active, can provide more concision and "authenticity" than I would ever attempt.

As it stands, these two veterans of gloriously whimsical improv have already made their statement, and it is loads of fun. In whatever context, they make the ensemble sound bigger through the huge arsenal of timbres they elicit from seemingly conventional instruments. Only sample the opening of "Rotten Herring Blues" to hear what sounds like Stackenas sandblasting a piano and Gustafsson unable to keep his motorcycle running smoothly. Yet, when the shrill overtones abate, and Gustafsson begins to emit some of his trademark overtones, the industroplatter takes on a sheen of eerie beauty. By contrast, "Bumblebee Blues" resembles nothing so much as a modified bowl of rice crispies, largely courtesy of Stackenas, who even manages to throw a couple old-fashioned blues licks in for good measure, but I'm not going there! Besides, that shouting from Gustafsson is far from a field holler, resembling more closely a bit of martial arts-induced exhortation.

Then, there is the disc's opening gesture, an extraordinary exploration of a fifth that slowly fragments into its component harmonics, those leading to related pitches as the two musicians simply breathe tones, exemplifying the weird synchronicities only improvised music can foster. It's one of many transcendental moments on a disc that is hilarious and gorgeous by turn, another jewel in Atavistic's crown.

Atavistic records:

www.atavistic.com

marc medwin

Jim Connolly and the Gove County String Quartet

Jim Connolly-contrabass

Sally Barr-violin

Kirsten Monke-violola

Laura Hackstein-violin

I wasn't that thrilled with the last Connolly project I reviewed (*Time Stops to Visit*) but I thought it had scads of promise. This outing goes a long way to fulfilling that promise. Fin de siecle Americana gets modern and cinematic on this record, a somewhat Kronos Quartet postmodernism crossed with quite a few strands from the homegrown warehouse: hymns, jazz, silent movie soundtracks, folk, Ben Johnston, and Dvorak's new world. It's a clear and powerful success. This group has helped Connolly to create a new type of American composition. Three, four, five cheers!

pfMENTUM

PFMCD 044

www.pfmentum.com

Richard Grooms

LIVE AT BEANBENDERS

CD

Rich Halley

Rich Halley, tenor sax & perc **Troy Grugett, Alto/Baritone sax & perc** **Michael Matkovich, trombone** **Rob Blakeslee, Trumpet/Cornet**
Phil Sparks, bass **William Thomas, Drums**

There is something about live recordings that "makes the music better". This CD from a live gig in San Francisco's (or is it Berkeley?) "Beanbenders" proves that to be true beyond the shadow of a doubt. As you can see from the player listing, this came near being a "big band" improv! It's a SUPER recording, which certainly enhances the experience, but it's the comfort level (& talent) of the players that makes it come across as if they were right there in your living room! The horns are striking for their compatibility, if nothing else... they stay right TOGETHER, sort of like an intelligent conversation. You who pursue improvised music(s) as fanatically as I do know that (especially for horn-based ensembles), this level of communication often doesn't come through. Well, it does HERE! I'd say this is the best recorded/sounding large group ensemble I've heard in 2000. Some of the pieces may be a little long for the "average" listener, but then (in this improv crowd) who is "average", anyway? The shortest piece 8:36, the longest just over 16 minutes. If you love high energy jazz improv in a big-band way, you'll agree (like, totally, people) with me when I declare this HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! Rotcod Zzaj

9Winds
POB 10082
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
USA
<http://members.aol.com/ninewinds>

My Dear Siegfried

David Behrman

Behrman- keyboards, electronics

Thomas Buckner, Maria Ludovici, Eric Barsness- vocalists

Peter Zummo- trombone

Ralph Samuelson- shakuhachi

Tod Hamilton- engineering and special effects

WW1-era antiwar British poet Siegfried Sassoon and American S.N. Behrman exchanged spirited letters and poetry for many years. David Behrman (apparently no relation to S.N.), inspired by this correspondence, programmed his electronic musical devices to interact with vocalists reciting some of these texts. The results are uneven. Behrman's instrumental subtleties are as wonderful here as they have been throughout his career. He is one of the 20th century's most gifted electronic music-makers (There, I said it). But the pastoral gentleness coming from his machinery is not very compatible with the largely unmusical character of the recited texts. I think it would've been much more preferable to let the listener silently read the texts while listening to the music; the two aren't inherently mismatched. An exception is the piece "Everyone Sang," the ecstatic poem Sassoon wrote to commemorate the end of WW1. The electronics fit well with the words, and that's mostly because the poem here is sung, not spoken.

Disc 2 in this 2-cd set is more enjoyable. Five more newly-recorded pieces by the composer are here and are all outstanding. "QSRL" and "Viewfinder" are Behrman at his lovely best, the electronic devices issuing music ranging from the gentle to the transcendently lyrical. "Touch Tones" and "Pools of Phase Locked Loops" are far more beautiful than their hardware titles would suggest. To say that disc 2 is worth the cost of the whole set would be a great understatement. Followers of Behrman won't want to miss this set and newcomers should try the second disc first.

Experimental Intermedia

XI 129

www.xirecords.org

Richard Grooms

Shadow Machine

Tom Hamilton / Bruce Eisenbeil

Hamilton- Nord Modular Synthesizer

Eisenbeil- guitar

Big on those old standbys discontinuity and abstraction, but not big on loudness and shock tactics, this record is selective in its out-ness. Occasionally it can get samey and wearisome, but it's typically quite capable of demonstrating the power of freedom and noise. Total freedom requires a very high level of inventiveness-otherwise, routine sets in. This duo are usually up to the challenge.

Pogus Productions

Pogus 21051-2

www.pogus.com

Richard Grooms

Pink Violin

Marina Hardy

Hardy- composer, performer

Now on display: Eastern Europe-flavored avant-pop, a meld of Holger Czukay, Jon Hassell and the more imaginative and original World trance music now busy blanketing planet Earth. It's way more quirky and odd than you'd expect. It's for listeners who like Tin Hat Trio but wish they could be weirder. Anything this fresh and unexpected shouldn't be this modest, though. Bigger labels that ignore material like this need therapy very badly, but they'll probably continue to behave as expected.

Richard Grooms

Viovox

Bob Harsh

Harsh- vocals, cello, violin, samples, loops

Bob Harsh does some righteously weird things here. He sets up swirling electrical fields of noise and on top of this overlays tapes of chopped-up, mystery-induced voices. On occasion he seems to make fun of these voices of the dead as on, well, “Bring Out the Dead” wherein he intones the very words the deceased (or at least the disembodied) speak. At other times Harsh sounds like a sidewalk crazy, as on “Rich Rule”; there’s very little parody here. During most of the record you can’t tell what Harsh is saying or singing or chanting. Syllables are lopped off, whole phrases are distorted. All of this creates radically new music, which is what you want, as they say. I’ve never heard C. Raudive’s tapes of alleged dead people but I don’t see how they could be stranger or more unsettling than this. Not for listeners who are transitioning out of institutions.

Public Eyesore 109

www.publiceyesore.com

Richard Grooms

Michael Fahres

The Tubes

Fahres- composer, tapes

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Parik Nazarian- voice

Mark Atkins- didgeridoo

On this Cold Blue disc are three compositions with room for a good bit of improvisation. Starting off is “Sevan”, a sort of lament for the Armenian lake of that name, a victim of industrialization. Parik Nazarian sings from inside one of the abandoned metal pipes that line part of the lake, producing vocal clouds that suggest a Central Asian Ligeti sound world. This voice alternates with a scraping, percussive noise which forces the listener back to earth, then it’s the clouds again, then the scraping, and so on, making for a somewhat disorienting but pleasing whole. If you take that scrape down to a smoothly-textured sound, you’ll get the very heavy breathing of “The Tubes”, built on a tape of volcanic rock tubes that channel forced ocean water. Fahres recorded them on site on the shores of an unspoiled island that is part of the Canary Island group. This tape (or tapes, maybe?), used as a rhythm track, is accompanied by Jon Hassell and his signature electronically-hushed trumpet and Mark Atkins’ didgeridoo, three sorts of tubes joining together for an exploration of hollowness, fullness, emptiness and solidness. I say that the tape is accompanied as if it’s a musician because it holds an equal place with the two humans here; it’s a kind of musician itself, partly because all three tube sounds work so well together. It’s scary relaxation music, full of the contradictions that phrase implies. “Coimbra 4, Mundi Theatre”, which Fahres assembled out of tapes of a Portuguese music festival he did not attend, is another strange attractor as it floats in the mind like a harmonious, misarchived trace of musical memory. It is musique concrete of a very beguiling sort.

Fahres’ pieces are haunting and they stay in the mind in a calming and elliptical way. Post-Classical music at it’s best.

Cold Blue – CB 0024

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Dreaming Wide Awake

New Circle Five

Monique Buzzarte- trombone, didjeridu, conch

Rosi Hertlein- violin, voice

Susie Ibarra- percussion

Kristin Norderval- soprano sax

Pauline Oliveros- accordion

The Deep Listening label consistently pleases and this outing by the New Circle Five is no exception. The title is spot on. It's calming yet restive and occupies a territory hard to define.

I was looking at photos of bacteria and archaea while I was listening to this. They fit very well with the character of the music: mysterious, subtle, gentle, non-obtrusive, intangible and refreshingly alien. And yet, like those microscopic creatures, the music here is a part of our unfamiliar world that is made vivid here.

Deep Listening

DL 20- 2003

www.deeplistening.org/dlc

Richard Grooms

Hanuman Sextet

Confusing the Devil

Rent Control Records, Rcrd0011

Andy Haas- shofar, raita, sax, elctronics

Don Fiorino- banjo, lotar, etc.

Mia Theodoratus- electric harp

Matt Heyner- bass

David Gould- drums

Dee Pop- perc.

Free improve from the Downtown NYC scene. Several things here are different from any freeprov material I've heard before. Haas plays the shofar (ram's horn) and the raita (Moroccan oboe). Fiorino plays the lotar (Moroccan lute). All of this adds new and intriguing horn colors to any improve music I've heard before. But it's Theodoratus' electric harp more than anything that stamps the sound of this band on the memory. It sometimes sounds like a strange variation on that stereotypical harp music used on tv shows to cue a flashback. That, and a half-dozen other things you wouldn't expect out of a harp, electric or not. It fits hand-in-glove with the band's swirling, almost chaotic semi-noise. Post-tribal, very hypnotic but pre-mental breakdown, this is music that renders listener psychoactive plant use redundant. Recommended for the tense and adventurous.

Rent Control Records
263 First Ave. #3
NY, NY 10003
<rentcontrolrecords.com>

Richard Grooms

Tuomo Haapala

Vattenvirlar/Movements In Rapid water

If you celebrate how **Oswaldo Golijov** refuses to recognize musical category boundaries and, partly as a result, comes up with treasures aplenty, you may be inclined to enjoy the Swedish composer/improvisor **Tuomo Haapala**.

"The World from Inside" takes bellwork plaintiveness to a place that suggests Arvo Part's pieces reworked into a more earthy strain and makes for pleasurably meditative results. "Midnight Music on the Water" blends free jazz, elk vocalizations (a Haapala regular feature) and almost Orff-like small vocal ensemble singing into a unified whole.

It works very well indeed and not just because the seemingly disparate styles here sound like they were always meant to be natural mates. "The Continents Move in the Night" also harmonizes an unlikely array of musics, crossing cultures and centuries in a startling way. This piece alone would be worth the price of the record. The recording date for this disc is 1996 so this qualifies for a hidden masterpiece. But really all the pieces here (which fuse composition and improv to the point where I can't tell which is which) are wonderfully inventive, consonant Nordic gems.

Very highly recommended.

Caprice

CAP 21524

<www.toccata.nu>

Richard Grooms

Tuomo Haapala

Sonic Poems

Haapala- bass violin

From the far north here are solo and duets led by the mostly alternatively-tuned bass. Are they compositions or improvisations? I don't know what the mix is. I just know that this is deep listening music that is highly imaginative and that the meditative intensity is the main attraction here. "Escaping Life" for bass, soprano sax, harpsichord and percussion is a wonder. Lotta Hasselquist's harpsichord is exquisite. "Calling Strange Herd Home" is inspired by the antique Finnish women's practice of calling cows home with "high-pitched calls." It's attractively rustic and Nordic. In "Eurasia" Haapala is joined by bouzouki player Mats Einarsson. Its title doesn't over-promise. Another standout is "Aria for Elk and Choir of Bassviolins." Here Haapala employs a field recording of an elk's voice that is, as the artist mentions, close to a human's. Can't decide if it's sorrowful or quizzical, and therein lies its value. Every track on this platter is a must. Haapala is one of Finland's, and Scandinavia's, leading lights.

Bokbandet

Bokbandet@telia.com

Richard Grooms

Luft

Iskra

Iskra:

Jorgen Adolfsson- reeds, misc. invented instruments, synthesizer, etc.

Tuomo Haapala- bass violin, misc. invented instruments, etc.

Sune Spangberg- percussion, etc.

Iskra did this one on their 20th anniversary and it shows why they were one of the key Swedish/Scandinavian improv groups in the 70's and 80's. On this disc are free improvs as well as some through-composed pieces. The offerings here give some idea of what ECM might be recording if they were more accepting of the wild and the wooly. There's a very large variety of musical moods here: primitive, reflective, delicate, introverted, and humorous ("Dance of the Gnomes"- don't judge it by its silly title). Iskra consistently avoids free clichés and pitfalls, constantly creating new sound textures, fresh approaches and more than a couple of things to plain marvel at.

Dragon (Of Sweden)

DRCD- 200

Richard Grooms

I Love You

Hochenkeit

Josh Hanson, S.L. and Mike Lastra (Harmonium, guitar, cumbus, drums, percussion, bass, theremin, bird whistles, analog electronics, thumb piano).

Mostly drony grooves that sound vaguely middle eastern. The occasional odd time signature appears. This is what one friend of mine would refer to as 'idiomatic improvisation', or variations within a theme. Another friend called it rock music, and I'd agree. It's periodically rhythmic and repetative, though without any words, or even voices, to focus on. Spooky synth colors some pieces. I'd put it in the same bag as ŒUmmagumma'-era Pink Floyd, or those 70's German bands like Can/Amon Duul. Pleasant waking-up-in-the-morning-with-my-cup-o-joe stuff. I liked the final cut the best. Bird twitters with synth burbles and chords, treated thumb piano and reverberant strings. It feels like it's title, 'A Roomful Of Sun'.

jeph jerman

**Road Cone
PO Box 8732
PDX OR 97207
roadcone.com**

Another Shining Path

Ye Ren

Gary Hassay (alto sax),
William Parker (bass),
Toshi Makihara (percussion)

"the highest level of logic is the lowest level of magic"

-William Parker

"...(my) intention/aspiration is to become music rather than to produce it." -Toshi Makihara

Both of these quotes, from the liner notes for this cd, seem to sum up a lot about the sounds on it. Sound that is conjured, second to second, where anything can happen, and frequently does. Hassay weaves lines and stops to ponder them simultaneously. Sparks and harmonics both fly from Parker's bow and Makihara keeps popping little bells and bangs in just the right places. It is a great rolling enveloping unfolding THING, and I'm awfully glad to be along on the ride. It does sound to me like logic is not the motivation here, as it seems to be with much music. But magic does abound, in the flowing out of sound, abetted by the attention each player is paying. To my mind, this is what improvising is all about. No one is taking the center stage here, but they're all three exploring together, hands on their instruments, hearts in the spirit. Odd sounds and tonalities are brought out, always carefully, and no one pushes too hard. Can you tell that I like this disc a lot?

I'd like to single out Toshi Makihara for a second, if I may, because he is largely unknown and undeservedly so. I have seen him perform a few times and I'm always amazed and delighted by his playing, his sounds, his MUSIC. If you get a chance to see him play, please don't miss out. I'm glad that there is a disc like this to hip folks to his drumming.

-jeph jerman

Drimala Records
P.O.Box 69044
Hampton, VA 23669
www.drimala.com

Rick Cox

Maria Falling Away

Rick Cox- elec. guitar, prepared elec. guitar, baritone elec. guitar,
alto sax, contra-alto clarinet, sampler

Guest artists (each on one track only):

Jon Hassell- trumpet
Thomas Newman- piano
Jeff Elmassion- clarinet
Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Here are six compositions (with some apparent improv) by Cox and others in duet format. On unusual occasions the Cold Blue esthetic can lapse into blandness, and the first three pieces here wouldn't be out of place on Music from the Hearts of Space. Which is a disappointment, knowing how much more Cox is usually capable of. 13 minutes into "The Years in Streams" and I was still waiting for it to take off. There's a lot of tapioca-like material here that just seems unending. This cd takes no risks (and risk is something Cold Blue excels at) and is almost unremittingly boring. But don't let it deter you from other Cox cd's which are vastly better than this one.

Cold Blue

CB 0006

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Like Minds

Emily Hay

flute, alto flute, voice, piccolo

Live improves collected over several years make up this issue. Hay pulls us onboard her distinct caravan of floating atmospherics and on-the-spot rituals. I like them when they're spacey ("Call to Unarm"), when they're goofy ("A Year and Two Weeks"), even when they are kinda ECM neoclassical ("Boiled Cadillac"). In "Wha Bout" she explores the ritual substrata that sounds like it might underpin all traditional cultures, i.e. she goes into Meredith Monk territory. Yet she makes music with her own stamp. That strata's got room for everybody. All her cohorts are recommendable. Let me just mention, however, Michael Whitmore on guitar and Brad Dutz on synthesizer, melodica and percussion. Hay is a top drawer improviser and she's very well accompanied here.

pf Mentum CD022

Richard Grooms

9 Meals From Anarchy

Hanuman Sextet

Andy Haas- sax, raita, morsing, live electronics

Don Florino- lotar, lap steel gtr.

Mia Theodoratus- electric harp

Matt Heyner- bass, erhu

David Gould- drums, perc.

Deepop- drums, perc.

More unexpected and entirely fresh music from the Hanumans. One of the elements that most makes this so welcome, so left-field, is Theodoratus' electric harp. She adds piquant and enlivening darts to each track, helping to make them gravity-defying and disarmingly festive. In fact, there's a joyful, buoyant spirit throughout, partly because the group takes such a casual and unrespectful attitude toward jazz and free improvisation. To them total freedom really is a means to do something that upsets expectations and boundaries. Heyner's mournful erhu and Florino's corkscrewy lap steel bring outside-the-box intelligence and heart to the proceedings. The Hanumans continue to banish constrictions, which is as high a compliment as I can pay them. There's as much originality and sheer surprise here as you'd find in an average 20-30 free albums.

www.myspace.com/RADIOCHINGNEWYORK

contact: radioi-ching@earthlink.nt

Resonant Music 007

Richard Grooms

My Dear Siegfried

David Behrman

Behrman- keyboards, electronics

Thomas Buckner, Maria Ludovici, Eric Barsness- vocalists

Peter Zummo- trombone

Ralph Samuelson- shakuhachi

Tod Hamilton- engineering and special effects

WW1-era antiwar British poet Siegfried Sassoon and American S.N. Behrman exchanged spirited letters and poetry for many years. David Behrman (apparently no relation to S.N.), inspired by this correspondence, programmed his electronic musical devices to interact with vocalists reciting some of these texts. The results are uneven. Behrman's instrumental subtleties are as wonderful here as they have been throughout his career. He is one of the 20th century's most gifted electronic music-makers (There, I said it). But the pastoral gentleness coming from his machinery is not very compatible with the largely unmusical character of the recited texts. I think it would've been much more preferable to let the listener silently read the texts while listening to the music; the two aren't inherently mismatched. An exception is the piece "Everyone Sang," the ecstatic poem Sassoon wrote to commemorate the end of WW1. The electronics fit well with the words, and that's mostly because the poem here is sung, not spoken.

Disc 2 in this 2-cd set is more enjoyable. Five more newly-recorded pieces by the composer are here and are all outstanding. "QSRL" and "Viewfinder" are Behrman at his lovely best, the electronic devices issuing music ranging from the gentle to the transcendently lyrical. "Touch Tones" and "Pools of Phase Locked Loops" are far more beautiful than their hardware titles would suggest. To say that disc 2 is worth the cost of the whole set would be a great understatement. Followers of Behrman won't want to miss this set and newcomers should try the second disc first.

Experimental Intermedia

XI 129

www.xirecords.org

Richard Grooms

Shadow Machine

Tom Hamilton / Bruce Eisenbeil

Hamilton- Nord Modular Synthesizer

Eisenbeil- guitar

Big on those old standbys discontinuity and abstraction, but not big on loudness and shock tactics, this record is selective in its out-ness. Occasionally it can get samey and wearisome, but it's typically quite capable of demonstrating the power of freedom and noise. Total freedom requires a very high level of inventiveness-otherwise, routine sets in. This duo are usually up to the challenge.

Pogus Productions

Pogus 21051-2

www.pogus.com

Richard Grooms

Viovox

Bob Harsh

Harsh- vocals, cello, violin, samples, loops

Bob Harsh does some righteously weird things here. He sets up swirling electrical fields of noise and on top of this overlays tapes of chopped-up, mystery-induced voices. On occasion he seems to make fun of these voices of the dead as on, well, "Bring Out the Dead" wherein he intones the very words the deceased (or at least the disembodied) speak. At other times Harsh sounds like a sidewalk crazy, as on "Rich Rule"; there's very little parody here. During most of the record you can't tell what Harsh is saying or singing or chanting. Syllables are lopped off, whole phrases are distorted. All of this creates radically new music, which is what you want, as they say. I've never heard C. Raudive's tapes of alleged dead people but I don't see how they could be stranger or more unsettling than this. Not for listeners who are transitioning out of institutions.

Richard Grooms

Viovox

Bob Harsh

Harsh- vocals, cello, violin, samples, loops

Bob Harsh does some righteously weird things here. He sets up swirling electrical fields of noise and on top of this overlays tapes of chopped-up, mystery-induced voices. On occasion he seems to make fun of these voices of the dead as on, well, “Bring Out the Dead” wherein he intones the very words the deceased (or at least the disembodied) speak. At other times Harsh sounds like a sidewalk crazy, as on “Rich Rule”; there’s very little parody here. During most of the record you can’t tell what Harsh is saying or singing or chanting. Syllables are lopped off, whole phrases are distorted. All of this creates radically new music, which is what you want, as they say. I’ve never heard C. Raudive’s tapes of alleged dead people but I don’t see how they could be stranger or more unsettling than this. Not for listeners who are transitioning out of institutions.

Michael Fahres

The Tubes

Fahres- composer, tapes

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Parik Nazarian- voice

Mark Atkins- didgeridoo

On this Cold Blue disc are three compositions with room for a good bit of improvisation. Starting off is “Sevan”, a sort of lament for the Armenian lake of that name, a victim of industrialization. Parik Nazarian sings from inside one of the abandoned metal pipes that line part of the lake, producing vocal clouds that suggest a Central Asian Ligeti sound world. This voice alternates with a scraping, percussive noise which forces the listener back to earth, then it’s the clouds again, then the scraping, and so on, making for a somewhat disorienting but pleasing whole. If you take that scrape down to a smoothly-textured sound, you’ll get the very heavy breathing of “The Tubes”, built on a tape of volcanic rock tubes that channel forced ocean water. Fahres recorded them on site on the shores of an unspoiled island that is part of the Canary Island group. This tape (or tapes, maybe?), used as a rhythm track, is accompanied by Jon Hassell and his signature electronically-hushed trumpet and Mark Atkins’ didgeridoo, three sorts of tubes joining together for an exploration of hollowness, fullness, emptiness and solidness. I say that the tape is accompanied as if it’s a musician because it holds an equal place with the two humans here; it’s a kind of musician itself, partly because all three tube sounds work so well together. It’s scary relaxation music, full of the contradictions that phrase implies. “Coimbra 4, Mundi Theatre”, which Fahres assembled out of tapes of a Portuguese music festival he did not attend, is another strange attractor as it floats in the mind like a harmonious, misarchived trace of musical memory. It is musique concrete of a very beguiling sort.

Fahres’ pieces are haunting and they stay in the mind in a calming and elliptical way. Post-Classical music at it’s best.

Cold Blue – CB 0024

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Dreaming Wide Awake

New Circle Five

Monique Buzzarte- trombone, didjeridu, conch

Rosi Hertlein- violin, voice

Susie Ibarra- percussion

Kristin Norderval- soprano sax

Pauline Oliveros- accordion

The Deep Listening label consistently pleases and this outing by the New Circle Five is no exception. The title is spot on. It's calming yet restive and occupies a territory hard to define.

I was looking at photos of bacteria and archaea while I was listening to this. They fit very well with the character of the music: mysterious, subtle, gentle, non-obtrusive, intangible and refreshingly alien. And yet, like those microscopic creatures, the music here is a part of our unfamiliar world that is made vivid here.

Deep Listening

DL 20- 2003

www.deeplistening.org/dlc

Richard Grooms

I Love You

Hochenkeit

Josh Hanson, S.L. and Mike Lastra (Harmonium, guitar, cumbus, drums, percussion, bass, theremin, bird whistles, analog electronics, thumb piano).

Mostly drony grooves that sound vaguely middle eastern. The occasional odd time signature appears. This is what one friend of mine would refer to as 'idiomatic improvisation', or variations within a theme. Another friend called it rock music, and I'd agree. It's periodically rhythmic and repetative, though without any words, or even voices, to focus on. Spooky synth colors some pieces. I'd put it in the same bag as ŒUmmagumma'-era Pink Floyd, or those 70's German bands like Can/Amon Duul. Pleasant waking-up-in-the-morning-with-my-cup-o-joe stuff. I liked the final cut the best. Bird twitters with synth burbles and chords, treated thumb piano and reverberant strings. It feels like it's title, 'A Roomful Of Sun'.

jeph jerman

Rick Cox

Maria Falling Away

Rick Cox- elec. guitar, prepared elec. guitar, baritone elec. guitar,
alto sax, contra-alto clarinet, sampler

Guest artists (each on one track only):

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Thomas Newman- piano

Jeff Elmassion- clarinet

Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Here are six compositions (with some apparent improv) by Cox and others in duet format. On unusual occasions the Cold Blue esthetic can lapse into blandness, and the first three pieces here wouldn't be out of place on Music from the Hearts of Space. Which is a disappointment, knowing how much more Cox is usually capable of. 13 minutes into "The Years in Streams" and I was still waiting for it to take off. There's a lot of tapioca-like material here that just seems unending. This cd takes no risks (and risk is something Cold Blue excels at) and is almost unremittingly boring. But don't let it deter you from other Cox cd's which are vastly better than this one.

Cold Blue

CB 0006

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Trad Corrosion

Gebhard Ullman (bass clarinet, soprano and tenor saxes, wood flute),

Phil Haynes (drums),

Andreas Willers (electric and classical guitars, electric sitar, prepared guitar).

Three names unknown to me until now, and I must confess I was prepared to not like this disc, based on certain personal prejudices about CD artwork. In future I think I'll just listen and not look right away, as I was pleasantly surprised. 19 mostly short (under 4 minutes) pieces that go in many directions. As all of the titles have only one writing credit, I'm assuming that these are loose compositions in which a lot of improvising takes place. Right now my favourite is 'Princess'. Written by stringster Willers, it starts with a drony sitar figure that stops and starts, accompanied by soft brushes on the drums and a single note ³beat² from the bass clarinet, that becomes a simple melody and then opens into a tricky fast little riff, before halting and slowing back down. In the middle we get buzzy noises and then a quiet solo from the sitar, and than a return to the theme.

On the whole, the music here presented is on the quieter side, especially for a drums/reeds/guitar trio. It sometimes skirts the edges of jazz, reminding me for short periods of John Abercrombie. The instruments take turns being the dominant voice, and change of direction is fairly frequent, bith traits I admire.

Now, about that cover art...

-jeph jerman

Nabel
Rochusstr. 61
D-52062 Aachen
Germany
Ph: (0) 241-2 57 35
Fax: (0) 241-3 14 12

Frank Gratkowski Trio:

"Gestalten"

Frank Gratkowski: Alto Sax, Bass Clarinet

Dieter Manderscheid: Bass

Gerry Hemingway: Percussion

I was *very* pleasantly surprised to hear this CD. I had seen Gratkowski live back in 1997. He was playing in, I believe, a duo with Fred Van Hove in Chicago. For some reason the set seemed an absolute bore, and so I wrote off Gratkowski that night as being more than an also-ran.

Turns out that Gratkowski must have been honing his craft since then--there's no way I could have overlooked that night the kind of exciting originality Gratkowski displays here. Hemingway and Manderscheid undoubtedly aid the quality, but Gratkowski has clearly earned his own eponymous trio.

As an alto player, Gratkowski currently uses two main modes of play. The first owes much to the attack of the bowed strings, and the spiky pointillism of Serial compositions. Add the rhythm section, and--if I might venture a visual analogy--the effect is like watching a slowly revolving crystalline mobile, hanging above a hoard of frogs snapping at flies. A nice bit of contrast and balance. Marcus Muller's liner notes make much of a Braxton comparison, and I can see how one might be reminded of Braxton when Gratkowski is in this mode. But Braxton's work has a more manic, forceful quality about it. Gratkowski, in mode one, might be better likened to a volume-pedal-pumping Derek Bailey.

Mode Two is just a hoot. Someday someone should do an acoustical study of how it is that different alto players still manage to find their own noises to make on the horn. Gratkowski in mode two reveals an ear for the absurd, the comic, without (importantly) a feel of smugness. He *means* it, and he brings an original voice to it.

As if that weren't enough, Gratkowski is a quite accomplished bass clarinet player. Too many free players want to make the bass clarinet into something it isn't--David Murray, for example, seems to merely transfer his tenor sax moves to it. At his best, Gratkowski promises to set a new standard on the instrument. Sure, it still has some of the familiar lugubriousness in places, making one wonder whether it was the best overall choice for a lead horn. But when FG sets his creativity to it, he again reveals his enviable ability to find new sounds and new chops that are guaranteed to surprise.

Hemingway and Manderscheid are nicely paired as a rhythm section. Hemingway's talents are undoubtedly familiar to most experienced listeners--here he employs his engaging kitchen sink slow burn to up the tension-release capabilities of the trio. He only seems out of place when he goes bombastic. Gratkowski is not exactly shooting for the Ayleresque, and Hemingway tries to push him there a couple of times. Manderscheid, though less well known, is well positioned, since his playing is scarcely less pointillistic than Hemingway's. Particularly nice is how he varies both timbre and attack. The sudden pops and click spring out of the mix and shift the focus of attention, and tension, at just the right times.

I suppose none of us should be judged by a single night live. I just hope that when I get to see Frank again, it will be with *this* trio!

- Wyman Brantley

Contact: JazzHausMusik
Vebloer Str. 40
50672 Köln
Germany

Great Sunset

William Hooker (drums,poetry),

Mark Hennen (piano),

Lewis Barnes(trumpet),

Charles Compo (tenor and baritone sax, flute),

Richard Keene (soprano and tenor sax, flute).

A short horn fanfare opens the first piece, Hooker exclaims "Yeah!" The horns repeat and then we're into a drums piano dialogue of frenetic energy. Horns re-enter to play more little riffs, and then queue up for solos., with Hooker inserting vocalisms, and occasional words, along the way. Reminds me of many records in my collection, and if I don't remind myself periodically who it is I'm listening to, I fall into believing it's some long lost 1960's New York session. Better sound quality perhaps, but the spirit is there.

The press material that accompanied this cd states that "this release emphasizes William Hooker's compositions within a jazz ensemble format", and I can hear a difference between this recording and his other work that I've heard. A little more cohesiveness, a little more of a BAND ambience,(the photograph of Hooker on the back of the CD hides his face), and what the ensemble lacks in "tightness," they seem to make up for in feel.

The cd is broken up into individual tracks, but it's really one thirty-eight minute suite. I love long-form compositions and I love Free Jazz. And, while I'm not a big Hooker fan, I do love this CD.

-jeph jerman

Warm-O-Brisk
P.O.Box 3491
Newport R.I. 02840

Pes

Henneman Strijkkwartet

**Mary Oliver (violin viola),
Ig Henneman (viola),
Tristan Honsinger (cello),
Wilbert de Joode (double bass)**

Unclear whether these are compositions or improvisations. Or maybe a bit of both? These pieces veer between strictly 20th Century composition-sounding to almost jaunty little bits of ditties that crop up unexpectedly in the midst of more atonal blasts. Some of it sounds quite old, ancient even.

There's even a bit of 'eleven year old practicing on a Sunday afternoon' type stuff. All interwoven in an artful manner. Im not much of a fan of string quartet music, but this CD really pricked my ears. Even with the sameness of sound over the length of the disc, the twists and turns keep it interesting.

jeph jerman

**Wig
Prinsengracht 1009
1017 KN Amsterdam
The Netherlands
tel: 020 622 8723
fax: 020 420 5379**

A.S.A.P WINGS

**killick erik hinds h'arpeggione
dennis palmer synth
bob stagner drums**

Never fails... live from those good ole boys from up thar in mountain country! They wheel a wicked time of goodness, arresting the most jaded of avant-garde enthusiasts, always!! no exception here, with a beautiful mix of sounds that spark from the raw sound of killick's varied stringed instruments, described thus as his "microtonal glory", the h'arpeggione (also referred to as the devil's cello) is an upright acoustic instrument with sympathetic strings.. imagine combined with the relentless drive of the Shakin Ray Levis- palmer reading fortunes on powered from the other side, his synthesizer mania and the always concurring punctuation, drive, and press of the stag on the drums. Ofcourse, there's the interesting Dennis ad libs, monster mash, singings and storyboard introductions that frame each piece with a cultural imagery that only a brave explorer could return from the outback wilderness of 'Hotlanter' and

report.
Altering experience it is, and exquisitely recorded.

Solponticello SRR

info@solponticello.com

LaDonna Smith

Samsingen

Anna-Kajsa Holmberg-vocals

Luca Serrapiglio-bass clarinet

Nicola Guazzaloca-vibes

Andred Serrapiglio-cello

Old Swedish folksongs given a very modern twist. The songs here will appeal to fans of Ale Moller of ECM fame or to any folkies who like strong new wine in old bottles. This group, who at first sound trad, aren't in the end going to appeal to traditionalists. The songs still sound timeless, though, as all well-performed folksongs tend to. Just remember, Steeleye Span once sounded new, too.

AMNR 004

www.amiranirecords.com

Richard Grooms

Sudoku 82

Christopher Hobbs- composer

Bryan Pezzone- piano

Music for live piano and tape loops of piano. Imagine spare, crystalline, space-filled acoustic piano playing. Then throw in some chance operations that refract and abstract all of this to the point where you can't quite pin any of it down. Almost pretty, almost tangible, it touches the outer rim of your attention and your conventional listening ability, always keeping its distance and mystery intact. The result isn't frustrating to listen to by any means, but attractively ineffable, bewitching and eldritch.

Cold Blue

CB 0033

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

My Bongo

Brad Dutz-perc.

John Holmes-perc.

Dutz and Holmes use dozens of instruments throughout this record. There are 16 tracks and very few of these instruments are employed twice. Included are some I've never heard of: kidi, sogo, cupchimes, caxixi, gyli, tar-ine and bougarabous. To what end? Well the duo tries to do what any adventurous musicians do-expand the possibilities of sound. It's well above-average fare here, but there's not much that's exactly arresting. Although I have to say that the tracks featuring the marimba and the waterphone are marvelous.

pfMENTUM

CD 012

www.pfmentim.com

Richard Grooms

Sleep Hammer

Bill Horist and Marron

Horist-guitar

Marron-electronics

The only other Horist cd (Songs from the Nerve Wheel) I've ever heard astounded me. I thought: if this is normal for him, he's one of the best free guitarists going. When I saw this and realized it had an electronics person I'd never heard of to boot I had high hopes. Stepping into *Sleep* didn't disappoint.

Track after track opened up new terrain. I was reminded of David Behrman's pastoral, wobbly, humanized electronics when I heard Marron. But this is something new. For one, it's sometimes frenetic, so there goes part of the Behrman reference. The duo make each track full of surprises in terms of tonality, texture, mood and overall architecture. Horist is adventurous as ever and Marron (Tanaka Yasuhiko) is a tonic. Both bring home the bacon. No New Music follower should pass this up.

Public Eyesore

PECD 102

www.publiceyesore.com

Richard Grooms

Coastal Traces

Eleanor Hovda

Hovda- composer, grand piano innards

Jack Vees- elec. bass, 12-string gtr., elec. gtr., waterphone

Libby Van Cleve- oboe, English horn, oboe d'amore, shenai

Real goods here, folks. "Coastal Traces Tidepools" for grand piano insides and waterphone, in its crystalline strangeness, makes me think of what fractals might sound like if they were physical and danced. "Glacier Track" raises sand deserts, not ice deserts. Van Cleve's oboe d'amore sounds an elegy for a lost tribal elder with its echoes of Middle Eastern sonorities. It's a stunner. Van Cleve uses the screaming potentials of the shenai to scary effect on "Shenai Sky" and "Beginnings." Throughout the record the categories "composed" and "improvised" are thoroughly blurred. The musicians offer droning, keening,

frayed but rich music throughout and the result is the stuff of depth, substrata and eternity, even. It's an involving, deep-listening excursion into the night side of reality.

OO Discs 0029

Richard Grooms

**The Perpetual Motion PIANO (CD) 2004
ArTist, Person, AnoNyMous, MysterY, HuMan,
Humphrey**

There was an immediate air of human intrigue as I pulled this piece from my rural mailbox ,

wrapped in newsprint, postmarked from Nederland, the only identifying mark was a common

mostly blank mailing sticker with www.dit.is/humphrey in old typewriter types that would be the

only clue as to the origin of the recording within..

Even more, the CD itself was packed in an artist formed homemade sleeve that simply said

The Perpetual Motion PIANO on the front, and on the opposite site, merely 32:9.

The disc inside was silver blank. No other identifying marks existed. When I placed it on the player,

no sound was heard.

I turned it over, to be sure I had the disc right side up, and this time it began.

It reminded me of a child that had just sat at the piano for the first time, and was testing the

tones, listening and remaining on one, then it began to move from a repeated octave to an

exploration of sound, growing in space and time as a flower would gradually open up into a

sophisticated archway of ominous sonic beauty. Large clusters moving around a single tone,

growing into a three tone minor third motif...to disappear in a misty presence'.

The following pieces would begin very un-self-consciously, and wander introspectively into

new themes and thematic or sonic explorations, that always gave the impression of the player

himself being drawn into the mystery of the piano, into it's sounds and sound combinations,

and into a sacred space of soundings, intervallic relationships, and pause which ranged from

a childlike inquiry to a very sophisticated manner of meditation.

I was drawn into this one. I will play it to soothe my soul, and stimulate my poetic intentions.

As I explored his website, I was just as moved by the deep compassion, inquiry, and marvel

that was so present in his drawings, sculpture, and poetry, an organic blending of whole person.

This CD is an Artifact, a musical rendering of a person indeed, who is listening & creating

from within his larger Soul. ~LaDonna Smith

Contact: Persuasion@freeler.nl

Live @ Banlieues Bleues

**Joelle Leandre (bass),
Francois Houle (reeds),
George Graewe (piano).**

A live recording by three of the heavier weights in Europe. Love it when people listen. Lots of space is accorded any new idea that springs up, and they constantly do. Emphasis shifts continuously from breath to vibrating strings and then to hammered string set. Sometimes I wish for a drummer, but then I remember to listen.

'Halos' is all harmonics...'From Limbo' starts with crunching and squeaking bass strings with quick runs and clusters from the piano. A crack and back to work, wait...go...wait...stuttering reed and pizzicato high strings...squeak scream...all unfolding like a story, which is how, I'm told, music is supposed to be.

'Aizi' definitely sounds like classical piano music. Or the way Cecil Taylor's dance slips between the cracks, Houle swinging around on a rope above the keyboard. It often sounds like these three are reading each others minds. Or a chart!

'Demonique' enters as it should, like a demon, or as much like one as piano, bass and clarinet can sound. Slips down a little, but keeps fighting... and then it's over. KNow the demons name and you control him.

A well recorded set of inspiring music. Nothing earth shattering, but then again, what is anymore?

jeph jerman

Any Terrain Tumultuous

**Francois Houle (clarinet),
Marilyn Crispell (piano)**

Definitely compositions. The title track goes from very austere beginnings to eventually live up to it's name, Houle blowing circles around Crispell's clusters and

runs. These are the most engaging parts of the disc for me, and I wish they'd just BLOW more often.

I guess the idea behind composing ideas to improvise around is so that the listeners, as well as the players, are spared those moments of wandering or un-inspiration. Does this point out a lack of ability in the composers? Perhaps. But these are two veterans, and I've heard them both improvise brilliantly in other contexts, so why the Forethought? Something to prove? Trying to get something across? I cannot in good conscience judge these compositions. They all sound more classical than jazz (to use worn-out terms) and during the written parts I find myself wishing they'd get to the fire. (When Crispell plays a solo, things burn right up.) I like the spareness of the two instruments' sounds, and the recording is excellent. My girlfriend, who's been listening along with me, found this CD more interesting than anything else I've played tonight.

jeph jerman

Red Toucan
9527-A Foucher
Montreal, Quebec
H2M 1W3 Canada
tel: 514 381 0003
fax: 514 381 0004

CD

HV West

Charles Peris, sax & flutes **Bruno Steffen**, piano

Herbert Kramis, bass **Mark Huber**, drums

This is THE best jazz/improv quartet I've heard in 2000! It's not just that their groove is tight (which it CERTAINLY is)... it's because they are able to paint brand new horizons in each & every composition (while staying clearly in the realm of "music"). Charles Peris flute playing (probably) has a lot to do with that, but all 4 musicians show themselves to be fully accomplished & sensitive to their surroundings. Don't let that keyword (sensitive) give you the impression that they can't "improv", though.. Track 4, "Big Bang", tho' very short (1:10), & the title track, "Zunder", show just how stellar & free they can be! Exceptional recording, high talent & an abundance of energy blend to provide an album that reflects all the good things improvised jazz should be. Bound to become a classic, this rates a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, without qualification.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Unit Records
POB 53
CH-179 Lugnorre
Switzerland

Electroacoustic Cello Book

Craig Hultgren (cello)

Showcase for Hultgren's playing, amid pre-recorded tapes. On the whole I think I'd prefer the cello alone. The first piece, Vivian Adelburg Rudows 'With Love' uses tapes of voices, with which the cellist is supposed to have a dialogue. Words very often detract from music for me, so the whole thing, although often humorous, often touching, left me feeling put upon. As though my emotions were being manipulated. (I suppose though that all music tends toward this state).

A few of the other pieces sound more like a good improvising ensemble. Hard to tell where a lot of these sounds originate. As the disc seems to have been damaged (or maybe my players being finicky), I'm not hearing all of some of the pieces. It doesn't seem to alter the listening experience. More unexpected sonic happenings.

I like Hultgren's playing a lot, and as I've mentioned before in these pages, I cannot judge compositions, so I'll say that these often don't sound like written music. Maybe a cellist and a computer. I'd love to hear Craig play with a real-time sound processor.

jeph jerman

Living artists recordings
P.O. Box 173
Desert Hot Springs CA 92240

Kelpland Serenades

Anna Humler- voice, toys, found objects

Stewart Liebig- contrabass guitars, electronics

“Winter Street”: rituals from a never-to-be-known culture, and it doesn’t echo Meredith Monk. Now that’s an opener. Each piece on this CD has well-honed bizarreness, and this structure saves them from the structure-free sameness so much free improv succumbs to. When you consider they’re live and undubbed tracks that only makes them more impressive. “Sidpaho” suggests music that might be made by Japanese human-electronic beings. “Fantasma” releases ethnic rites mixed with electronics that grow organically out of the work (or out of the play, maybe I should say). Ritual song after ritual song rises out of the molten stew. Throughout the platter the two musicians never sound contrived or affected in the slightest. Rather, they seem to be coming from some long-established but hitherto unknown culture, in or out of our space-time continuum.

They never forget that new music should surprise, astonish and delight the listener. Ravishing doesn’t hurt, either. In 12 years of reviewing improv records this is one of the 4 or 5 most exceptional I’ve come across. Beautifully recorded, too. Track it down by all means.

pfMentum
CD 029

P.O. Box 1653
Ventura, Calif. 93002

The Wind At Beni Midar

for six celli and other works

**Robert Scott Thompson (composer, computer processed sound),
Craig Hultgren (cello)**

No information accompanied this CDR, so I'm not positive if the six cellos were overdubbed or processed...or both. In any case 'The Wind At Beni Midar' is a long piece which apparently took nine years to write. Using extended techniques as well as

strait bowing or pizzicato, this music does sort of conjure up wind for me, rising and falling, changing pitch and direction...sudden bursts of percussiveness die suddenly, the silence filling with rich chords or short melodies. It sweeps out toward the edges of tonality, stops, putters, strikes... regroupes and tries to sing, it's voice a slippery croak.

By contrast the computer generated pieces were less interesting for me, though I can hear why people use computers to make music. This stuff simply couldn't be played by anything else. There's something about the sound though, that irks me, continually pulls my mind away from listening into a sort of repulsion with the sounds themselves. So synthetic and, well, plastic.

Could this have been a more interesting listen if these two had improvised together?
Will we ever know?

jeph jerman

Aucourant Records
P.O. Box 2231
Roswell Georgia 30077-2231
aucourant@aucourantrecords.com
www.aucourantrecords.com

Musique Action

Hyperion Ensemble

Ioan-Marius Lacraru- violin, viola
Andrei Kiru- cello
Alexandra Dutulescu- cello
Ioan Ghita- contrabass
Vasile Nedelcu- perc. lap gtr.

20th Century bleak atonalism meets free improv harsh randomness. With these two streams I didn't have much of a chance since these are two traditions that leave me cold. Result: ugly, directionless, arid music. This certainly makes a case for the view that the universe is meaningless and that there's no hope, no hope. This will be an affirming gift for anyone you know who's determined to stay miserable for the sake of their art.

Richard Grooms

Cuneiform
PO Box 8427

Silver Spring, MD
20907

FRINGES CD 01

Giuseppe Ielasi

Giuseppe Ielasi: Acoustic guitar & other strings

Renato Rinaldi: Strings, harmonium, amplified objects

Deomenico Sciajno: Double bass, live electronics

Gino Robair: Wood, Skin, Metal, Plastic & Hair

Some very interesting improvisations, with a focus on acoustics & percussives, as you might imagine from the listing of players & their instruments. A living room recording - which, as many readers of "the Improvisor" know, is where some of the best happen! The difference between this & many of the early '80's home recordings is EXCELLENT sound quality. I am immediately reminded of some of the work I've heard from Ernesto Diaz-Infante (who SHOULD hook up with this quartet!) Listeners who have been "desensitized" by their daily doses of formula pap (i.e., AM/FM Amurrican RAY-dee-yo) will have a difficult time catching the intended intricacies; but they are present in full force for the listener who understands how to seek out the hidden orchestrals. VERY intense & clearly focused on the joy of music freely played. They get my vote for "best acoustic improv" & certainly rate the MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED rating I'm giving them. Some FINE improvised music - this CD is a KEEPER, people!

-Rotcod Zzaj

Fringenrecordings,
c/o Giuseppe Ielasi
Via A. Volta 6 20052
Monza (MI)
Italy

On The Leopard Altar

Daniel Lentz

Voices-Jessica Lowe, Paul Mackey, Susan James, Dennis Parnell

Keyboards-Brad Ellis, David Kuehn, Arlene Dunlap, Lentz

Wineglasses-Ellis, Kuehn, Dunlap, Lowe, James

This record came out first in 1984 on Icon records then quickly went out of print to my dismay. It got good notices then and I have to say it was well worth the wait. Five early compositions by Lentz are here. In "Is It Love?" the voices chant texts in hypnotic, subtractive patterns. It makes you think of early Glass only it's more informal and hotwired. "Lascaux" for wineglass ensemble makes sound wave reverberation a positive virtue. Lentz is the champion and master of the under-appreciated wineglass. Here, as in so much of his career, he fully embraces beauty, which is almost as reckless today as it was in 1984. That's other folks' loss. The work is as gorgeous as all get-out, so bleak modernists were being given notice. "On The Leopard Altar" is mesmerizingly attractive, even lush, and the ensemble here, as on every track on this record, performs excellently. The voices are partly Glassian, but much more erotic than anything the sober Glass was coming up with. "Wolf Is Dead" has plenty of repetitive playfulness and is very light on its feet. "Requiem" takes words from a Latin Mass and might be the soundtrack for a Catholic David Lynch movie. This is one of the very best Cold Blues. Enthusiastically recommended.

Cold Blue

CB 0022

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

The Long and the Short of It (elc 12017)

John Jasnoch – electric guitar, acoustic 12 string guitar, lap steel guitar, mandolin, tenor banjo

Helmut Lemke – strings, tapes, tenor sax, bass clarinet, voice

A playful, yet edgy, *immediacy*, is what first jumps out at you on this CD. These live improvisations actually *sound* improvised – raw, on-the-edge, physically palpable. You can really *feel* the music being created in the respective environments.

Though both players have easily distinguishable sounds and styles: Jasnoch, a fleet-fingered, wiry twang that manages to sound laid-back and propulsive, idiomatic and non-idiomatic, at the same time; and Lemke, a wide-ranging, unpredictable, forceful, almost rambunctious, personality that comes through strongly on each instrument – it is their tandem sound that puts this CD on a higher level than most.

It's a hard-scrabble, bustling sound that builds in intensity as the pieces develop but not in predictable ways. There's a complex, almost paradoxical, manner in which these two improvise together. Though there's obvious rapport, their energies don't always "mesh" in harmonious accommodation. The resultant music therefore has a razor-sharp "aliveness" " to it, a sense of intense concentration, rather than competition, that I find exhilarating. This CD captures that elusive, "in the moment" sound of a good duo gig as well as any I've heard.

-wally shoup

Contact: John Jasnoch
66 Robey St.
Sheffield, S48JF UK

Scala

The Navigators

Beatrix Ward-Fernandez- violin, theremin, wood

Charles Collins- vibraphone, lamellophones, metal

John Jasnach- 12-string gtr., ud, ukulele, frame drum

The trebly nature of this unusual combination of instruments, added to the childlike exploratory nature of the performers, makes for afresh, off-center and very engaging take on free music. Very enjoyable and recommended to those who don't think improv should be sturm und drang all the time.

Found Property Records

007

www.foundpropetyrecordings.com

Richard Grooms

Blue-Eyed Easter Island Babies

Jaws of the Flying Carpet

Jaws' record here is just one more justification for a very independent music scene. This is a group I've never heard of, though I've been following free music for decades. They are part of an Ottawa improv culture and they've been around for 25 years! Pan-everything could describe them and they put it all into a kind of linear surrealism where you can giddily follow the development of each cut. Pretty accessible, then for this kind of music, but by no means less captivating for that. Almost every track is damned original. That's a lot of hurdles that Jaws has jumped. They play instruments from all over the world but there's nothing remotely Up With People here of course. There is a little, not-very-exciting jazz rock, but about four-fifths of the content succeeds admirably. It mostly hangs together and it's more than a bit mushroomy. An album that gives New Music a swift kick in the pants, something New Music, like anything else, regularly needs.

OPI/CJI/BU3/SQ4

www.thebabyuniverse.com

Richard Grooms

eff Kaiser Ockodektet

13 Themes for a Triskadekaphobic

Kaiser- conductor, trumpet

pfMentum

If you're a fan of AACM, Sun Ra, BAG and the tradition that came out of them, and if you've despaired at the dwindling bits left of that tradition, you should give an ear to these folks. They've put out some avant big band CDs that do this vein proud indeed. Improv/structure tension, pan-African-American heritage, cheerful surrealism- it's all here, and more besides. *Devout, venerable, hoary-headed man* is a sort of Ra (whooping R&B organ) and Art Ensemble of Chicago (gospel/marching band feverishness always on the verge of losing its balance) tribute that's enormous fun. There's enough here to reinvigorate the big band tradition as a whole, not just the outside cats. But there's a lot on this disc that could still give Wynton Marsalis the shivers. (Wynton, yes. But some of his big band cohorts would say yes indeed.) The Either/Orchestra better keep these guys in their sights because they have serious competition now and I think Kaiser's group has gone on ahead. American free music has its African-American heart still beating. I can hear it now.

pfMentum
P.O. Box 1653
Ventura, Calif. 93002

[<pfMentum.com>](http://pfMentum.com)

Richard Grooms

The Psyche

The Revolutionary Ensemble

Leroy Jenkins- violin, viola

Sirone- bass

Jerome Cooper- drums, piano

The Psyche

The Revolutionary Ensemble

Leroy Jenkins- violin, viola

Sirone- bass

Jerome Cooper- drums, piano

A 2002 reissue of an obscure 1975 LP that came to my notice in our review hopper in 2007.

Though they almost bite off more than they can chew on a nearly half-hour opener, the RE pulls rabbits out of hats, defies gravity and goes way beyond the call of duty to bring it home. There's excellent improvising on the remaining two, "hu-man" and "collegno." The only bad thing that can be said is it's not up there with their A&M/Horizon record, which is like saying that K2 isn't as high as Everest.

Mutable 17514-2

<mutablemusic.com>

Richard Grooms

The Chord Catalogue

Tom Johnson- piano

A 31- page liner notebook full of mathematical charts and formulas is enough to put anyone off this cd. It's intimidating to a math phobic reviewer like me. And usually the cd's with the most long-winded liner notes and the most unapproachable theories usually have the least to offer musically. But maybe it takes more than a couple pages to get a fix on "all the 8178 chords possible in one octave." In this case, the octaves are c to c1. The first few chords are too simple and logical in the repetitiveness and progression. After about ten minutes we get to 5-note chords that make you lose your sense of balance and time a bit. Kind of like "In C" played on a piano, or "In C" reduced, flattened to a thin line of simple, shimmering pianistics. The whole schmeer doesn't have enough staying power for me, but lovers of extreme minimalism may well be captivated. Kudos to XI for plowing terrain that would otherwise go uncultivated, though.

-Richard Grooms

XI Records
PO Box 1754
Canal St. Station
NY, NY 10013

Yo Miles! / Upriver

Henry Kaiser & Wadada Leo Smit

I frankly wouldn't look forward to much of anyone covering Miles' jazz-rock standards but Kaiser and Smith aren't just anybody, but two of a very tiny number who could've pulled this off. Not only do they not disappoint, they exceed my expectations. This is way more than a respectful homage because I'd like to think it'd be fiery enough to goose Miles if he could hear it. Hats off to them, then. They've gone where angels would've feared to tread and come back with a bountiful harvest.

Cuneiform/Rune 201/202

<cuneiformrecords.com>

Richard Grooms

Do The Glimpse

Luv Rokambo

Toru Toneyama- elec. gtr., keybs., toys, vocal

Osam Kato- elec. and acous. Gtrs., keybs., vocal

"Lament" gives the listener a powerfully ritualistic experience with a repeating, cyclical guitar figure and wordless vocals. Not all the rest of this record is as strong or concise as this, but about half of it is worth listening to. The whole platter is worth owning just for "Lament", though.

www.sinkhole.net/pehome

Richard Grooms

"This is nmperign's second cd"

nmperign

Greg Kelley: trumpet
Bhob Rainey: soprano saxophone
With Jason Lescalleet: tapeloops
Phil Gelb: shakuhachi
Tatsuya Nakatani: percussion

There is a kind of free improvisation that has much in common with such "composed" music as many of John Cage's performances, and Stockhausen's "Gold dust." If you are familiar with those examples, you might recall that even on recordings, the listener is practically thrown into the room with the players: the sounds of feet shuffling on floors, breaths sucked in, generally quiet instrument noises, and, especially, *lots* of space, tend to sketch out the space in the minds eye.

Both Kelley and Rainey use extremely intimate attacks on their instruments. There is nary a "normal" instrument sound out of either of them, but instead reams of breathy extended technique. These aren't the techniques you're used to either: nmperign manage to hew the improvisational shrubbery into a garden of unearthly shapes.

It can get a bit claustrophobic, this space that the listener shares with the players. There is the sense that something very *serious* is going on, despite the chortles and honks that the instruments emit. This probably has something to do with the presence of all that pregnant silence, the long tones, and the hesitant fades-in of each act of silence breaking. When this reviewer saw Kelley, Rainey and Nakatani in concert in '98, the music was so quiet most of the time that it felt a bit awkward to make any sounds from the audience area. The louder sections allowed finally us to breathe.

Speaking of the louder, less spacious sections: Lescallet contributes much of the density on track two. His tape loops are low-fi, high frequency electronic chirpings and gurglings that replace the room sounds on the other tracks. With Rainey twittering along, the recording takes up where the sorely missed Music Improvisation Company left off.

Ironically, on the final track there is an inverse relation between the number of players and how much is going on musically, when Gelb and Nakatani guest star. The group remains safely within "little instruments" territory, as Nakatani largely putters about in his toy box, and the wind players breathe long, if quirky, notes.

All told, nmperign's second cd is worth checking out. Don't expect to breathlessly follow each note with a sense of anticipation, but do expect to admire their inventiveness as players, and their advancement of the quieter wing of improvisors.

-Wyman Brantley

(tw 1049)
Twisted Village
12B Eliot Street
Cambridge MA 02138

Accidents With Nature

Harris Newman- gtr., lapsteel

Bruce Cawdron- perc., glockenspiel

For most of my life I've been enamored of the nuevo folk Takoma label that came out of the 60s. Newman takes that sound (especially the John Fahey element) with its blending of American folk and Middle Eastern harmonics and reshapes it. The instruments used are acoustic, but Newman and Cawdron sometimes make them sound electronic, apparently with tape manipulation. It's all pretty Fahey-esque until "It's a Trap" introduces more idiosyncratic sound suggesting plaintive, prairie-like psychic landscapes. From here on, this is the shape of the album. Newman is with this cd still somewhat under Fahey's shadow, but a good two-thirds of the material here show him claiming a plot of land as his own- a darker, moodier, lonelier place than the Takoma boys have. It's worth your time.

Strange Attractors

SA H029

P.O. Box 13007

Portland, Oregon 97213-0007

www.strange.atractors.com

Richard Grooms

DalabaFrithGlickRiemanKihlstedt

Lesli Dalaba- trumpet

Fred Frith- gtr.

Eric Rieman- prepared & extended Rhodes elec. piano

Carla Kihlstedt- violin, elec. violin, Stroh violin

Whenever I test run an improv CD, one question I ask is: Does it pass the originality test? Many players who use free methods end up sounding more or less the same. Improv can be a tar pit: all that freedom is there, but that same freedom pulls legions into paradoxical conformity. This quartet easily clears that boondoggle. Though the playing is free, structure arises out of the air and lightly imposes itself. A highpoint is "Worm Anvil" which hits its stride when a taped bit sounding like one of Godzilla's rivals sets up a structure all of the group happily spin circles around. Frith is in top form here, summoning and utilizing an exhilarating array of textures, timbres and unexpected sounds. Not a few of the sonics here are things you can trace to any of the above-listed instruments, so hats off to the spirit of inventiveness, but it means I can't definitively give credit to individual artists. I'm familiar with Frith's style, so it's easier to pick him out. So let me just say that the whole group deserves equal praise. They're doing a crack job in high style.

Accretions

ALP 030CD

www.accretions.com

Richard Grooms

A.S.A.P WINGS

killick erik hinds h'arpeggione
dennis palmer synth
bob stagner drums

Never fails... live from those good ole boys from up thar in mountain country! They wheel a wicked time of goodness, arresting the most jaded of avant-garde enthusiasts, always!! no exception here, with a beautiful mix of sounds that spark from the raw sound of killick's varied stringed instruments, described thus as his "microtonal glory", the h'arpeggione (also referred to as the devil's cello) is an upright acoustic instrument with sympathetic strings.. imagine combined with the relentless drive of the Shakin Ray Levis- palmer reading fortunes on powered from the other side, his synthesizer mania and the always concurring punctuation, drive, and press of the stag on the drums.

Ofcourse, there's the interesting Dennis ad libs, monster mash, singings and storyboard introductions that frame each piece with a cultural imagery that only a brave explorer could return from the outback wilderness of 'Hotlanter' and report.

Altering experience it is, and exquisitely recorded.

Solponticello SRR

info@solponticello.com

LaDonna Smith

Killick bull****

Killick- 38-string harp guitar

What does music for 38-string harp guitar sound like? There are liner notes by the artist (who recorded the album and did the artwork), but I couldn't make much out of them. I couldn't read most of the song titles because of the maybe-too-artistic way they fade into the dark background. A homemade project to be sure, but that's of course part of the fun. The harp guitar solos (all live) are a challenge to describe. At times they sound like an impossibly nimble conventional acoustic guitar, at others times a tiny gamelan orchestra. And on the opener a bunch of giant, hungry throbbing wires about to devour you. On another track like a creature that lets its stomach boom repeatedly, vaguely like frogs. These solos might as well be a collection of not-necessarily-related instruments, all of which are new (or at least newish) in their array of sounds. Recommended for fans of the newly-created instrument genre and adventurous string instrument listeners.

www.solponticello.com

Richard Grooms

Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise

Liz Albee- trumpet, shell, electronics

B. Deiler- drums

Killick Hinds- guitar, electronics, voice

Larry Ocha- tenor, soprano saxes

D. Porter- voice

If I misspelled any of the above info I offer apologies. The liner notes are very small-even with a magnifying glass. Same issue with the song titles only much more so.

This isn't gas music from Jupiter, it's post-everything music from Georgia. Blisteringly loud jazz-related material is here, and it's okay I suppose, but it's the watery/gargley/grunting content that is much more novel. It's funny, too, which is always welcome in the free improv corner of the world. There's a cut that gradually becomes the Tibetan monks with the ultra-long trumpets and all that melds with a sort-of jazz big band. It sounds unworkable on paper but it succeeds totally. On another track a cookie monster does a moody soul-funk outing; this one is good campy noise and a fine parody of adolescent gothic rock. Later on hip-hop and current dance music are put to surprising uses. A frequently successful pomo diversion, this album has plenty that rises and makes a fine mess.

Solponticello

S7 025

Richard Grooms

Scientists Levitate Small Animals

Zepublicle

Killick-stringed h'arpggione

Marshall Marotte-guitars

Jeff Mcleod-guitar, Chapman stick

Tatsuya Nakatani-percussion

If the *White Light/White Heat* Velvet Underground had evolved into a free improv group, the resulting band might've made a record like this one by Zepublic. The sound of a train outside my house appeared at the same time the same sound appeared on this record. There are many gifts here which may provide something similar for you. It'll get you in touch with your inner drones.

Solponticello Records

SP 023

www.solponticello.com

Richard Grooms

Musica Genera

Bergmark and Klapper

Johannes Bergmark- 19+ instruments and devices

Martin Klapper- 7+ devices and toys

This'll do to your stiff notions of musical propriety what a good massage will do to your knotted muscles. It's a *Popular Mechanics* way of knowledge. It's what some people think of when they think of the lunacy of free improv, and I like it like that. What Lord Buckley would've called "*a gassah!*" and that's because someone left the

id out in the rain and I don't think they'll ever find that Betty Crocker book again.
Bergmark and Klapper are just what the root doctor ordered.

www.rwert.art.pl

Richard Grooms

Jurgen Knieper - "State of Things"

Matthias Harig - tp, flgh

Dirk Engelhardt - ts, ss

Jurgen Knieper - p, comp, arr

Mickey Bahner - b

Stefan Thimm - dr

After years of making his mark as a film score composer, and becoming one of Europe's most important creator of film music (on cooperation with Wim Wenders, i.e., Der Amerikanische Freund/Ripley's Game, Himmel uber Berlin...), Knieper offers "State of Things" as one of his first jazz productions.

Choosing four of Berlin's best musicians, this classical jazz quintet gives you clear and precise play on each instrument, which is often highlighted in various solo expression throughout this CD.

Mostly upbeat and toe-tapping, Knieper knows when to slow it down to provide the listener with a well rounded experience. While I believe it appeals to the mainstream, come listen to yet another side of Knieper...good CD. - Robin Taylor

JazzHausMusik, Venloerstr, 40, 50672 Koln; Tel +49 221 952994 50; Fax +49 221 952994 90; e-mail - jhm@jazzhausmusik.de; <http://jazzhausmusik.de>

Light That Fills The World

John Luther Adams

Marty Walker- bass clarinet

Amy Knoles-vibes and marimba

Bryan Pezzone-piano

Nathaniel Reichman- elec. keyboards, sound design

Robin Lorentz-violin

Barry Newton-double bass

Three compositions by Adams that confirm his marvelous, chilly sense of northern space. “Farthest Place” is a lush, brightly elegant, somewhat Steve Reichian piece that puts the listener firmly in the arctic, the keyboardists and Knoles providing a luminous bed of rhythms. A bright discovery. The title work is less sumptuous than this because it’s mysterious and withholds something. But it’s just as enjoyable and near-zero. “Immeasurable Space of Tones” is somewhere between the first and second pieces, again filling the listener with a sense of great space, cold and wonder. In fact all three tracks seem like parts of a larger piece. Their titles don’t exaggerate, and they would, like many Cold Blue releases, appeal to fans of holy minimalism, even though I haven’t seen any info that specifically indicates that any of the label’s composers are mystics.

Cold Blue

CB 0010

www.coldbluemusic.com

Fidel

Koch-Schutz-Studer & Musicos Cubanos

Hans Koch (bass clarinet, electronics, samples, tapes, sequencer, soprano sax, tenor sax,),
Martin Schutz (electric 5 string cello, acoustic cello, samples, electronics),
Freddy Studer (drums, percussion, metal),
with the members of **Musicos Cubanos** on latin percussion and voices.

On first hearing I could not shake the memories this disc conjured up. Bill Laswell-like bass (cello?) lines, dense latin percussion backed by driving drum kit...sudden bursts of a-rhythm and a-tonality that get interrupted by more percussing. I kept hearing Material...Golden Palaminos and 23 Skidoo, all bands I have loved at one time or another.

Some of the material here was dreamed up by the europeans, and some is apparently more traditionally Cuban, over which the improvisors improvise, somehow managing to never sound out of place. A cultural exchange?

I think this set points out the fallacy of musical boundaries, that sounds made by humans can usually find common ground, no matter how seemingly disparate their origins. Perhaps this is a political recording, something which I usually have little ear for. But when the results are this pleasing, this interesting...this much of a groove, I cease to care. I would hope that these three continue their musical explorations. How about a record with some Koreans? Or Morroccans?

A word about Intakt Records is in order as well. All of their packages I have seen are well made with beautiful color photos of the performers and plenty of liner text for those inclined to read it. I listen forward for more.

jeph jerman

Intakt Records
P.O.Box 468
CH-8024 Zurich
Switzerland
www.intaktrec.ch
intakt@intaktrec.ch

The Zero Hour - “Departure Of One”

All guitar, bass, vox, percussion, drum programming by Robert J.

“Darkness within darkness. The Gateway to All Understanding.” ...TAO

SEX - got your attention? If so, you will probably like this CD. The feel is dark, moody and at times slinky. Just picture a hybrid of Julee Cruse, Chris Isaak and Nick Cave. Winding through driving guitars, crooning, acoustics, echoing and the list goes on. I like #9 the best - “you make me feel, like I feel, when I’m with you.” All in all this is a good CD. I personally think David Lynch should check this guy out for his next movie soundtrack. - Robin Taylor

Rude Dog Records

P.O. Box 27221

Tempe, AZ 85282-7221 USA

Natura Naturans

Dave Knott (stringboards, voice)

A CD of one man improvising on his self-designed and built instruments.

Stringboards are essentially hunks of cast-off wood with tuning pegs and guitar strings attached. That description does not prepare one for what they

sound like though. Distant bells, odd filings and ratchetings, electrical sounding buzzes, (these are acoustic instruments), giant out-of-tune dulcimers, prepared guitars, warped blues records...all these and more are conjured from these simple devices at the hands of Mr. Knott.

The improvisations range from short sound explorations to longer structurings and build-ups of sound-mass. There is often a rise and fall, or start and stop approach, using not playing as much as playing. The sounds of the space where the recordings took place, (the old anomalous records space in Seattle Washington), can also be heard occasionally. Oddly enough, traffic sounds seem to fit right in, and some banging from the shop next door works as well.

The titles of the pieces give clues to what may have been going through Dave's mind while he was making this recording, and index numbers will help you with what's what. (I believe this is the first time I've ever seen this feature on a CD). I listen to this disc often, and coming from me, that's high praise indeed. -jeph jerman

anomalous records
P.O. Box 22195
Seattle WA 98122-0195
orders@anomalouerecords.com
<http://www.anomalousrecords.com>

Natura Naturans

Dave Knott- stringboards of found wood and prepared strings

I've looked at Anomalous' pan-label website a couple of times. And been impressed. It's one of the most extensive avant records websites in the world, perhaps numero uno. A successor to NMDS, or Wayside Music. They have their own house label. So they're welcome as heck. Knott's guitar strings are fixed to pieces of wood and anchored with tuning pegs. He sounds like a one-man Harry Partch ensemble shattered,

atomized even. Good in smaller doses; gets wearisome played at full length. Worth at least one or two listens, all you prepared instrument builders and Partchniks.

-Richard Grooms

Anomalous Records

(NOT1)

PO Box 22195

Seattle, Wash. 98122-0195

Hartmut Kracht - “Kontrabass pur”

Hartmut Kracht - Double Bass

“Kontrabass pur” is a CD between tradition and experiment. Kracht explores a range of emotions and is not restricted at all by the instruments so-called restricted frequency ranges. Kracht is all over this bass, using the bow, picking and also as a percussive instrument. In the words of a colleague of Kracht, this is a “piece of unpredictable, lively avant-garde.” - Robin Taylor

CONTACT: JazzHausMusik, Venloerstr. 40, 50672 Köln; Tel - + 49 221 942994 50;
Fax - + 49 221 952994 90; E-mail: jhm@jazzhausmusik.de;
<http://www.jazzhausmusik.de>

CD

HV West

Charles Peris, sax & flutes **Bruno Steffen**, piano

Herbert Kramis, bass **Mark Huber**, drums

This is THE best jazz/improv quartet I've heard in 2000! It's not just that their groove is tight (which it CERTAINLY is)... it's because they are able to paint brand new horizons in each & every composition (while staying clearly in the realm of "music"). Charles Peris flute playing (probably) has a lot to do with that, but all 4 musicians show themselves to be fully accomplished & sensitive to their surroundings. Don't let that keyword (sensitive) give you the impression that they can't "improv", though.. Track 4, "Big Bang", tho' very short (1:10), & the title track, "Zunder", show just how stellar & free they can be! Exceptional recording, high talent & an abundance of energy blend to provide an album that reflects all the good things improvised jazz should be. Bound to become a classic, this rates a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, without qualification.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Unit Records
POB 53
CH-179 Lugnorre
Switzerland

AC DC VC

Works for solo electronic cello

Jeffrey Krieger (electronic cello, effects, voice)

My favourite piece on this disc by far is Sarah Hopkins 'Cello Chi', a melancholy piece which sets up drones over which the cellist overtone sings, before moving to more melodic material and then back to overtones. Very rich.

Alvin Lucier's 'Indian Summer (1993)', showcases difference tones between two closely tuned strings. A difficult listen for some, but give it time and you may become fascinated by the acoustic beating.

Kaija Saariaho's 'Petals' veers between melodies and harsher sounds, all quite heavily processed. N. Sean William's 'Come Window Golds Coming' moves ever so slowly, rising from silence and falling back into it. And Ronald Halier's 'UITT (particolare)' takes a single gesture and examines it with a microscope, sounding rather un-cello-like. More like a window washer scrubbing a really stubborn spot. A nice showcase for Krieger's talent. I'd love to hear him improvise.

jeph jerman

Nonsequitur/What Next? Recordings
P.O. box 344
Albuquerque NM 87103
tel/fax: 505 224 9483
nonsequitur@flash.net

On The Leopard Altar

Daniel Lentz

Voices-Jessica Lowe, Paul Mackey, Susan James, Dennis Parnell

Keyboards-Brad Ellis, David Kuehn, Arlene Dunlap, Lentz

Wineglasses-Ellis, Kuehn, Dunlap, Lowe, James

This record came out first in 1984 on Icon records then quickly went out of print to my dismay. It got good notices then and I have to say it was well worth the wait. Five early compositions by Lentz are here. In “Is It Love?” the voices chant texts in hypnotic, subtractive patterns. It makes you think of early Glass only it’s more informal and hotwired. “Lascaux” for wineglass ensemble makes sound wave reverberation a positive virtue. Lentz is the champion and master of the under-appreciated wineglass. Here, as in so much of his career, he fully embraces beauty, which is almost as reckless today as it was in 1984. That’s other folks’ loss. The work is as gorgeous as all get-out, so bleak modernists were being given notice. “On The Leopard Altar” is mesmerizingly attractive, even lush, and the ensemble here, as on every track on this record, performs excellently. The voices are partly Glassian, but much more erotic than anything the sober Glass was coming up with. “Wolf Is Dead” has plenty of repetitive playfulness and is very light on its feet. “Requiem” takes words from a Latin Mass and might be the soundtrack for a Catholic David Lynch movie. This is one of the very best Cold Blues. Enthusiastically recommended.

Cold Blue

CB 0022

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

10 of Dukes + 6 Originals

Steve Lacy: solo soprano saxophone

A moment in an afternoon, Sunday at the Egg Farm (Japan), well known saxophonist extraordinaire, Steve Lacy bounces his introverted sound off of wooden walls for a small live audience, mellow, gracefully reminiscent of his first inspiration in jazz, the Duke Ellington Band. This is a sequence in which he experiments with techniques, subtle polytones, growls, smears and kisses, enhancing the stretched melodies of the predecessor. After the break, there are six original Lacy compositions: Art, Gospel, On a Midnite Kick, Wave Lover, The Breath, and Traces. The music is personal, ambient, stream of consciousness alive in the moment.

Available by internet only.

www.senatorsrecords.com

LEG END

CD

Henry Cow

Geoff Leigh, reeds & vox, **Tim Hodgkinson**, keys, alto sax, clarinet, vox **John Greaves**, bass, piano, whistle, vox **Fred Frith**, guitars, violin, viola, vox **Chris Cutler**, drums, toys, piano, whistle, vox

I had listened to an old, OLD Henry Cow many years back & only remember an impression of "dirge", somehow. This CD starts off with (what sounds like) an homage to "Jazz From Hell", titled "Nirvana For Mice". Absolutely LOVED it... big-band rodent regalia! Touches of "smooth improv" on cut 2. There are some amazing vocal stretches on the last track, "Nine Funerals of the Citizen King", in a very orchestral meandering through modern rock-op. In the overall, this is a very interesting listen, certainly qualifying as a challenging listen. Some excellent

guitar works (especially on track 6) & flow. Energy levels weren't quite what I anticipated, ergo a **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED rating. Those in love with listening through an entire CD for the intricate nuances at one sitting will find it very enjoyable.**

-Rotcod Zzaj

MEGACORP

79 Beulah Rd., Thornton Heath

Surrey CR7 8UG

UK

Point Conception

Daniel Lentz

Lentz-composer

Arlene Dunlap-piano

Bryan Pezzone-piano

"Point Conception", one of Daniel Lentz's major early pieces, is back on cd here. The title piece is scored for nine pianos, all played by Lentz, who multitracks himself. Nine pianos may sound like overkill to some but it is a delicate, lithe and agile work and it seems as though no more than three or four pianos are going at any one time. The piece proceeds ever onward in ecstatic, even rapturous ways. Like much of Lentz's output it's inviting and a pleasure to listen to. Lentz has long since committed the heresy of making modern classical music that bears no relation to castor oil and once again I take my hat off to him. This is one of the great 70's minimalist compositions. "Nightbreaker," also included here, is for four pianos, in this case multitracked by Pezzone. It sounds nothing like any Lentz work I've ever heard, integrating Liszt-like late Romanticism and frenetically repeated Latin

American strains into an overall dizzying success. A cd essential for all followers of minimalism and post-minimalism.

Cold Blue

CB 0028

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

The Long and the Short of It (elc 12017)

John Jasnoch – electric guitar, acoustic 12 string guitar, lap steel guitar, mandolin, tenor banjo

Helmut Lemke – strings, tapes, tenor sax, bass clarinet, voice

A playful, yet edgy, *immediacy*, is what first jumps out at you on this CD. These live improvisations actually *sound* improvised – raw, on-the-edge, physically palpable. You can really *feel* the music being created in the respective environments.

Though both players have easily distinguishable sounds and styles: Jasnoch, a fleet-fingered, wiry twang that manages to sound laid-back and propulsive, idiomatic and non-idiomatic, at the same time; and Lemke, a wide-ranging, unpredictable, forceful, almost rambunctious, personality that comes through strongly on each instrument – it is their tandem sound that puts this CD on a higher level than most.

It's a hard-scrabble, bustling sound that builds in intensity as the pieces develop but not in predictable ways. There's a complex, almost paradoxical, manner in which these two improvise together. Though there's obvious rapport, their energies don't always "mesh" in harmonious accommodation. The resultant music therefore has a razor-sharp "aliveness" to it, a sense of intense concentration, rather than competition, that I find exhilarating. This CD captures that elusive, "in the moment" sound of a good duo gig as well as any I've heard.

-wally shoup

Contact: John Jasnoch
66 Robey St.
Sheffield, S48JF UK

Thousand Year Dreaming/Floating World

Annea Lockwood

If there was any justice Annea Lockwood would be widely considered one of the finest living American composers. You might think that the title of a section of the title piece-*The Chi Rises*-portends something New Age but you couldn't be more wrong. (Hope the establishment isn't judging her by her titles!) Her music has a foothold in modernist classical music but is firmly post-classical. Part of what that means is she isn't bound by the boring norms of most university composers. *Thousand* is haunting and ethereal and gradually builds up into something universal. As the title suggests it has an ageless sensibility much as does, say, Stockhausen's *Stimmung*. It seems as though past, present and future all intermingle here. Most of it is composed but small parts are improvised. It's a masterpiece and not to be missed. In *Floating World* Lockwood blends field recordings made by environmental sound artists into a richly sensual work that defies expectations as much as *Thousand*. A highly recommended record.

Pogus Productions

P21045-2

www.pogus.com

Richard Grooms

On The Leopard Altar

Daniel Lentz

Voices-Jessica Lowe, Paul Mackey, Susan James, Dennis Parnell

Keyboards-Brad Ellis, David Kuehn, Arlene Dunlap, Lentz

Wineglasses-Ellis, Kuehn, Dunlap, Lowe, James

This record came out first in 1984 on Icon records then quickly went out of print to my dismay. It got good notices then and I have to say it was well worth the wait. Five early compositions by Lentz are here. In “Is It Love?” the voices chant texts in hypnotic, subtractive patterns. It makes you think of early Glass only it’s more informal and hotwired. “Lascaux” for wineglass ensemble makes sound wave reverberation a positive virtue. Lentz is the champion and master of the under-appreciated wineglass. Here, as in so much of his career, he fully embraces beauty, which is almost as reckless today as it was in 1984. That’s other folks’ loss. The work is as gorgeous as all get-out, so bleak modernists were being given notice. “On The Leopard Altar” is mesmerizingly attractive, even lush, and the ensemble here, as on every track on this record, performs excellently. The voices are partly Glassian, but much more erotic than anything the sober Glass was coming up with. “Wolf Is Dead” has plenty of repetitive playfulness and is very light on its feet. “Requiem” takes words from a Latin Mass and might be the soundtrack for a Catholic David Lynch movie. This is one of the very best Cold Blues. Enthusiastically recommended.

Cold Blue

CB 0022

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

MACHINE FOR MAKING SENSE

CD

Dissect the Body

Too many artists to itemize

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! I haven't laughed so hard in months... "sense compared to what"? This little CD from Australia features some of the most original (aboriginal) improvisations & vocal integrations I've heard in quite some time. This is that improvisation you can't label, can't pigeonhole, can't equate to anything else you've heard. If you were flying on pink-dot or some other variant, you'd picture yourself being eaten by monkeys in the deepest, darkest outback you could ever imagine. OTOH, if you were stone cold sober, this would GIVE you nightmares! This is EXACTLY the kind of music that should be played in classrooms throughout the world... those with political aspirations wouldn't have a CHANCE of survival if our kids were raised in this level of freedom & enchantment. I kept waiting for Jeffrey Morgan to pop in there with a section of "Little Farts", but it never came to be. Anyway, this gets a MOST MIGHTILY RECOMMENDED from me for those with a true thirst for original improvised music. Just SUPERB!!! **-Rotcod Zzaj**

Split Records

POB 445

Potts Point NSW 2011

Australia

Trios

Tom Erbe- recording, editing, processing

Chris Mann- voice, texts

Larry Polansky- electric gtrs.

Douglass Repetto- computer, electronics

Christian Wolff- recording, piano, bass, perc., melodica

Signals are coming in from the cosmic ether or maybe from a universal databank that stores enormous amounts of electronic sounds and speech. You can't quite make out the speech because it's speeded up or distorted in some other way. Is that an auctioneer? A request? A complaint? Words hover so they are almost intelligible- but not quite. Sounds do the same. Yet there is a very rough flow to the material here. Material is a good word- music, composition, or pieces just wouldn't work. The flow gradually becomes the structure. And it makes for a heady experience. It's what the Akashic Record (the Theosophical Record of Everything) might sound like unfiltered. Don't get me wrong- there's nothing remotely New Age or woo-woo here. And don't take it all in one gulp- that'd be indulgent.

Pogus Productions

P2 1031-2

www.pogus.com

Richard Grooms

Sleep Hammer

Bill Horist and Marron

Horist-guitar

Marron-electronics

The only other Horist cd (Songs from the Nerve Wheel) I've ever heard astounded me. I thought: if this is normal for him, he's one of the best free guitarists going. When I saw this and realized it had an electronics person I'd never heard of to boot I had high hopes. Stepping into *Sleep* didn't disappoint. Track after track opened up new terrain. I was reminded of David Behrman's pastoral, wobbly, humanized electronics when I heard Marron. But this is something new. For one, it's sometimes frenetic, so there goes part of the Behrman reference. The duo make each track full of surprises in terms of tonality, texture, mood and overall architecture. Horist is adventurous as ever and Marron (Tanaka Yasuhiko) is a tonic. Both bring home the bacon. No New Music follower should pass this up.

Public Eyesore

PECD 102

www.publiceyesore.com

Richard Grooms

Scientists Levitate Small Animals

Zepublicle

Killick-stringed h'arpggione

Marshall Marotte-guitars

Jeff Mcleod-guitar, Chapman stick

Tatsuya Nakatani-percussion

If the *White Light/White Heat* Velvet Underground had evolved into a free improv group, the resulting band might've made a record like this one by Zepublic. The sound of a train outside my house appeared at the same time the same sound appeared on this record. There are many gifts here which may provide something similar for you. It'll get you in touch with your inner drones.

Solponticello Records

SP 023

www.solponticello.com

Richard Grooms

Game/No Game

George Marsh- perc.

W.A. Mathieu- piano

I'm partial to Mathieu's solo work, but it's hard to love these duets. Too much of the content here recalls the same old over-polite, overly-white and retentive music found at the crossroads of jazz and classical. The dread figure of third stream rears its head regularly. Too well-behaved for jazz or classical, this is simply uninspiring. People have been making music that sounds exactly like this for at least thirty-five years, and it was never a good idea in the first place. Mathieu's previous work that I've heard is far better than this and is similar to Terry Riley's solo piano work. Be sure to check it out.

Mutablemusic

Mutable 17518-2

www.mutablemusic.com

Richard Groom

DIVERTISSEMENT CD

Misterioso

Massimo Rossi, alto & saxophones, Rosella Cangini, voice Carlo Actis Dolo, baritone sax & bass clarinet Federico Marchesano, double bass & el. bass

A CD in from "centro musica creativo". Well, creative it most certainly IS! I particularly enjoyed the wierd combinations of voice & reeds performed by Rosella. This music is high-energy horn based pandemonium - but not the "screech & whistle" kind. Well formed sounds, complete interactions that form an enchanting mix that's hard to resist. Those with (any) difficulty understanding how light and shadow affect aural images may also find this more of a challenge than they can deal with, but those who thirst for talent unbounded will certainly thrive. These folks are clearly in love with freedom in music, improvising from the first bar to the last. I can (now) see why my friend Amy Denio loves Italia so much... on second thought, she PROBABLY had much to DO with this level of creativity occurring. In a sense, comparisons with her more poignant vocal works are certainly in order. In the overall, a fantastic musical experience that gives the listener an equal mix of each player's broad skill range. Gets a **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from me.**

-Rotcod Zzaj

**Massimo Rossi
c.so Mazzini 32-10080
Rivara, Italy**

Misterioso

Automatismi

CMC

Massimo Rossi- alto and soprano sax

Rosella Cangini- voice

Frederico Marchesano- acoustic bass

Dario Bruna- percussion

A good and lively spin, this. Cangini is the focus here. Her vocals are flexible, highly supple, and spirited. It must be a blast to see this group live. Imagine Lambert, Hendricks and Ross distilled down to one voice able to throw itself into dizzying, fantastical whirls, accompanied by very nimble backing players. In particular, Rossi's saxes are strong throughout. The fact that I can't figure out the lyrics only added to my giddy listening experience. Take this in small chunks or you might get exhausted or dizzy. Hats off!

CMC

2003-2

e.maxrossi@libero.it

C.so Mazzini 32
10080 Rivara (TO) Italy

Richard Grooms

HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN

improvisations for oboe and four keyboards

Marianne Osiel, oboe

with

Robert Barrows, pipe organ

Denman Maroney, hyperpiano

Jordan Rudess, synthesizer

John Simon, piano

The new CD by Marianne Osiel brings an immediate aura of repose and peace

into the moment. Introspective, very alive, investigational, both in both sonic quality,

and musical explorations, the inner voice that sings through the instruments reveal

the subtle qualities of gentle light through sound. A sound that is spaced in a meditation,

a flow which is not forced or created, but noticed. A very internal, etherial, and

even spiritual offering, this work is a masterwork of beauty and quiet energy.

Improvised freely in the movement of the moment, the oboe is like a lonely pilgrim singing

in the wake of the dark harmonic settings and movements played by the pipe organ, the piano,

and synthesized backgrounds. The quote on the back cover from L. Cohen says it well,

"Ring the bells that still can ring.

Forget your perfect offering

There's a crack in everything.

That's how the Light gets in."

The pleasing ambience will surely affect mindful stillness in the

contemplative listener. ~ LaDonna Smith

mosiel@optonline.net

Shell Of Certainty

Steve Franklin (keyboards), **Tim Crowther** (guitar and guitar synth), **Tony Marsh** (drums).

Improvised electric music. These guys credentials look like a who's who of 'jazz-rock', or what we used to call 'prog-rock' back in the day. And sound-wise at least, that's what it calls to my mind. Memories of Crimso and the Softs, National Heath et al, kept recurring as I listened to this. But that's just the SOUND of it. The structures are all improvised, so there's not a lot of unison riffing or odd-meter time signatures. Instead we get tasteful use of effects and much interplay, the keyboards at times acting as backing for guitar forays, at others engaged in call and response, or setting a general mood.

"Council Of All Being" sets out to be a vehicle for Crowther's guitar in a no-key-or tone-center solo, with Franklin doing an excellent job of following along (or maybe, going there with!). Eventually the keys take over and the guitar synth backs up, and it's all stop/start staccato notes and drumming...until the big sweeping washes of chords come in and we're back to guitar space. At least I think that's what I'm hearing. It's hard to tell sometimes.

"Tremors" starts quieter and quicker, with more staccato, and definitely recognizable strings and keys. These gents are listening well to each other, with no one really taking over for any period of time. Eventually this tune turns to call and response-type textures the drummer alternating between filling in the holes and palying along with one or the other instrument.

"Arboreal" is more ethereal sounding, washes of echoed chords and pinging cymbals. Overall I'd recommend this to fans of the above mentioned bands, or anyone interested in listening to players that listen.

jeph jerman

Visionlogic
P.O.Box 24365
London SW17 9FG
U.K.
email: tim@visionlogic.demon.co.uk
www.visionlogic.demon.co.uk

distributed is the US by Wayside

Game/No Game

George Marsh- perc.

W.A. Mathieu- piano

I'm partial to Mathieu's solo work, but it's hard to love these duets. Too much of the content here recalls the same old over-polite, overly-white and retentive music found at the crossroads of jazz and classical. The dread figure of third stream rears its head regularly. Too well-behaved for jazz or classical, this is simply uninspiring. People have been making music that sounds exactly like this for at least thirty-five years, and it was never a good idea in the first place. Mathieu's previous work that I've heard is

far better than this and is similar to Terry Riley's solo piano work. Be sure to check it out.

Mutablemusic

Mutable 17518-2

www.mutablemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Airs

Loren MazzaCane Connors (guitar)

Quiet, sparse, slightly processed electric guitar, perhaps multi-tracked, in 19 untitled airs, and one called "The Death of Shelley". If you've heard LMC before, you probably know what to expect. The word melancholy keeps coming to mind. Not much dissonance, just a ringing tone, a little reverb or delay, and a nice touch. This music fit quite well with the sight of bamboo waving in the wind outside my window, and I can imagine the whole scene slowed down into an endless afternoon of remembrances.

-jeph jerman

Contact:
Road Cone
PO Box 8732
Portland, Oregon 97297
<http://roadcone.com>
info@roadcone.com

Process 2

Rafal Mazur - bass
Rafal Drewniany - laptop
Michal Dymny - e-guitar
and
Attila Dóra - sax

The newest AudioTong release is an out-come of one of the improvised sessions which are frequently organized by musicians from improviser's collective working at "Laboratory of Intuition - studio of developing and promotion of improvised art" which is located in Krakow.

The music is fiercely beautiful. I am completely energized by it! The events on Untitled 1 take you into a realm of huge spacial clarity, with the vibratory energies releasing, & entraining symbiotic energies in your spatio-physical-auditory awareness. Your voices are heard, and visualized, ringing true and clear! Untitled 2, brings the energy it all up close and saturates you with its penetrating demanding presence. It only escalates from there... Untitled 3 again returns you into the "realm" the "zone" the inner mindings ...and Untitled 4 sounding the terrain of drips, and air, pops, and reverberations of the inner digestion of musical molecules and morphs.. A comfort food.

PROCESS- Laboratory of Intuition is an ensemble of improvisers founded by Rafal Mazur in 2004.

The music is downloadable here:

<http://audiotong.net/audio/releases/tng1027-en.html>

www.rafałmazur.com

www.improart.eu

~LaDonna Smith

FROGGIN' AROUND

CD

Chris McCann-Billy Pierce Trio

Chris McCann, drums

Billy Pierce, Tenor & Soprano sax

Steve Wallace - bass

McCann's drums shine on this CD in from Creative Improvised Music projects. There's no slouchin' from the saxes or backin' off on th' bass, either! From the standpoint of improv, however, the focus seems to be on Pierce's sax playing... not that that's a "bad" thing; but (at times), it's almost like he's the only one playing (even tho' that's not the reality of it). One unique thing was hearing someone (Billy) "scatting" in the background... neat, 'coz it reminded me of some of the way-early albums I hear Roland Kirk play on. Extended listening reveals that what's really goin' on with this group is a kinda' "circular solo", in which each instrument take a brief solo stint & eventually passes it back to Pierce. Would I classify it as improvised music? Nearly; tho' it treads closely around the flagpole of conventional jazz. From THAT perspective, it is an EXCELLENT musical experience that many "straight" jazzheads will fall in love with immediately. If you're looking for genuinely high-energy improv, this gets a RECOMMENDED rating from me. **-Rotcod Zzaj**

Creative Improvised Music Projects

The Cadence Building

Redwood, NY 13679

USA

"The Opposite of War"

Steve McLean Ensemble

Steve McLean: guitar

Tim Inman: keyboards

Jim McGirr: bass

Dave Fields: drums

The liner notes to this disc are quite up front about the fact that *none* of the music is improvised. This should give readers (and thus, this reviewer) of the Improvisor pause as to the point of having a review of such a disc. Therefore, I will be up front about the reasons reviewing this disk seemed relevant: (1) *some* of the apparent influences of the music of the group are probably influences of many Improvisor readers; (2) the

compositional style is somewhat forward-looking and non-mainstream, if poorly-executed and derivative.

Perhaps the best way to give the flavor of this disc, is to point out that the tune "Windows Part I" sounds (in parts) like King Crimson's "Larks Tongues in Aspic" as covered by the Yellow Jackets. The band is very much a combination of the veneer and attack of the most egregious Fuzak groups, with the quirky excesses of Progressive Rock bands of the 70's and 80's (and perhaps some even now ensconced in garage/basement oblivion.) There are the strong accents on the on-beats and unison phrasing of the main themes, so common to cultural accidents like Spyro Gyra and Lee Ritenour. Often in combination with the latter, and usually played by McLean, there are practically plagiarized Frippisms--hypnotically-repeated, minor-key, bouncy circular patterns, in odd times like 5/4 and 7/4.

As to the compositions themselves, they are characterized by their choppiness--like the worst excesses of Prog Rock. The "tunes" are largely vignettes that are strung together with a sense of cohesiveness that is at best unclear. The chord progressions are very primitive. It sounds like the impetus behind them is to transfer the same finger positions to different parts of the guitar, rather than any kind of voice leading or concern for the overall piece. Further adding to the jumble is the fact that each tune is flanked by a few seconds of electronic sound effects--pleasant for those interested in equipment demos, but merely filler to the close listener.

The liner notes even seem to suggest that the tunes might have literally been collages of recordings, pieced together using state-of-the-art music software. Post-modernistic collages in music tend to appeal to those whose sensibilities are less mainstream, so the choice to give these songs the smooth, emotionless veneer of commercial jazz is highly questionable choice.

Other tunes, like "Flow" and parts of "Space," back off of the Fuzak to borrow from early Genesis albums like "Selling England by Pound." Here we find a softer, more contemplative approach, dominated by tasteful, open piano-patch voicings by Tim Inman. If not for the Frippian elements, one would half expect to hear Peter Gabriel enter after each break. These pieces are less annoying, and more cohesive, yet the style has been done, and better.

Things lay back even more for the dreamy Fuzak love song "Fourth Dimension"--at least for parts of it. This could be the background for the ocean view romance scene in any straight-to-video Wings Hauser epic. However, even in this setting McLean inexplicably splices in a few bars of the punchy minor-key stuff and ups the pace. This song is another example of how unpredictable the CD is, but how meager the payoff.

-Wyman Brantley

Contact: smac1@maine.rr.com
Recommended Records, (SM1

Ye Shall Be Cut Into Many Pieces

Jeff McLeod

From the liner notes...

This CD is the result of an entire year of daily recording. Each day, no matter where I was, I would record 10 seconds of something whether it was a mini composition put together at home or a church bell ringing in Madison, WI.

Jeff McLeod spent a month editing these 365 clips into the 19 pieces on this CD which serves mostly as his musical diary. It is a diary of a man with lots of 20th century angst. There is lots of industrial guitar here but there is also lots of found sounds and musical culture kitch too. He also has on hand some consumer percussion electronics, both consumer and 70's style synthesizers, guitar fx boxes, a vocoder. I suspect that Jeff has a lifetime of musical electronics collecting in his studio. This is not something new for him.

It is a musical diary and it does have the feel of a year of human experience but I hope that the diary metaphor is not too accurate. One of the clips has a female voice accusing someone of cheating on her. One of the pieces is titled "Kidney Stone."

I prefer the more meditative pieces on here. The theremin piece is my favorite.

The short vignette format is suggestive of movie soundtrack. In that vein, I can describe this CD as a combination of action flick, sci-fi flick, thriller, psycho-thriller, and war flick.

There is lots of testosterone here but I don't mean to imply that this is juvenile. Oh, no. This is not boys in the garage with their guitars. This is seasoned testosterone music.

But the music is not deconstructive which makes the CD's title misleading. This is pure music collage. I like his alternative title better. Again, from the liner notes...

One Huge Slab of Nonsense.

The Subversive Workshop
1629 Chateau Circle
Montgomery, AL 36106

email: subversive@mindspring.com

web: <http://www.mp3.com/mcleod>

Impossible Shapes

Chris Meloche

Meloche- electronics

English Electric Records, CSA 302

I can't get excited about the first couple of tracks here. They seem to reinforce the stereotype that current electronic music is cold, unfeeling and uninvolving. I'm glad I kept going, though. "Endgame (for Morton Feldman)" offers something novel. Maybe it's because I'm a Feldman aficionado. Like that composer's works it gives a sense of time stopped but still moving, stasis in motion. Listening to this cut is the musical equivalent to watching subatomic particles slowly dance in some parallel dimension. "Half Arcane" seems to actualize its subtitle: "Netherworld Soundscape." Here the sound of distorted alphorns (that's right), slapping noises and various alienating effects put the listener in a world that's acoustically neither here nor there, the alphorns throbbing resonantly like sound beacons marking an unfindable place. This Canadian composer is one to pay attention to.

www.chrismeloche.com

Richard Grooms

Stephan Meinberg Vitamine - "Horizontal"

Stephan Meinberg - tp, flgh, toy-duck

Angelika Niescier - as, fl, ss

Heiko Kulenkampff - p, acc

Sebastian Rather - b, e-b

Christian Thome - dr, voc, p

Vitamine is the new band of Stephan Meinberg.

Meinberg, a German Academic Exchange Services scholarship holder in New York, has developed new ideas in improvisational music, learning from some of the best musicians in the world.

Angelika Niescier, a recent award winner in Dusseldorf, improves her musical abilities here. She also has her own band SUBLIM, which is on the German scene.

With "Horizontal," Meinberg incorporates New Music composition with traditional jazz, appealing to both traditionalists, as well as those involved in the improv and/or Free Scene.

These young musicians have clearly shown that they are talented beyond their years. - Robin Taylor

CONTACT: JazzHausMusik, Venloerstr. 40, 50672 Koln; Tel - + 49 221 942994 50;
Fax - + 49 221 952994 90; E-mail: jhm@jazzhausmusik.de;
<http://www.jazzhausmusik.de>

Continuo

Frederico Barabino- classical gtr. and electronics

Sergio Merce- amplified objects and electronics

What if that pretty, repetitive siren call of New Age music actually rose to a higher strata and did something significant? That seems like a fit description of this modest little CD. Only about 28 minutes long: the duo provides gentle washes and scrapings of acoustics and electronics that rise out of their lonely, haunted world. Not comfy, but serene. Not easy, but involving.

Richard Grooms

Vex

OHM/AVTR009

Christof Migone, Michel Cote, Louis Ouellet

Gregory Whitehead ([Instrumentation not listed](#))

Improv pieces in honor of boho pantheon members Gilles Deleuze and Artaud. Also Satie, who's not in that group (maybe because he didn't advocate cruelty). I had to use the search button to see where these were going at times. Fast forward didn't offer much illumination, though. The one above it -skip- may come in handy for some listeners. Rowdy pattering around the studio is what's generally on offer here. This would be pretty okay accompanying a documentary about the first two men. And it evokes the randomness of radio stations half heard late at night, but it's not nearly as good as Cage doing that. It's mostly something that accompanies a thing, not the thing itself.

Richard Grooms

Ohm Editions
541 St. Vallier Est #4
Quebec (Qc) G1K 3P9
Canada

Bespoken

Lorenzo Dal Ri- sound treatments, live electronics, field recordings

Gianni Mimmo- soprano and bass saxes, piano and prepared piano

Contemplative, relaxing and weird all at once. Certainly not a common mixture. It puts the listener on an odd plateau that provides a bizarre perspective that is balanced and unbalanced at the same time, much like waking up in a new world. Saxes, pianos and so on don't sound like saxes pianos and so on. And why should they? Pursue this and listen to it.

Amirani Records

AMRN 003

www.amiranirecords.com

Richard Grooms

CLAUDIO PONTIGGIA

Nine Compositions

"GENERATOR"

Sort of a best hits album in from this label in Switzerland. Nineteen cuts in a variety of styles, some improvised, others leaning more towards more standard jazz. There are some WONDERFUL pieces on here.. a favorite (for me) was "Le Menagerie de Poche", which features some high-end & *high energy* flugelhorn by Matthieu Michel... it didn't last *long enough*, but it was a real treat. There are also several pieces that have

excellent percussion on them (track 1, "Sticks & Mallets" is a good example). Each of the cuts is (apparently) from a separate album from the label... this would be an excellent way to find out if a particular album was worth buying. While I didn't find a lot here that would delight the "pure" improv fanatic, there is some RICH music on this CD - it gets a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for those who want diversity & a taste of the new in their musical adventures.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Solo 3

Roscoe Mitchell

Roscoe Mitchell- saxes, flute, perc.

Roscoe Mitchell has been one of my mainstays for over thirty years now. His work with the Art Ensemble of Chicago and as a solo player has been bountiful beyond measure. I am chagrined to say that much of the solo reed material here is uncharacteristically coldly abstract. And there is a lot of it, filling up two discs. The third cd, which almost all features his percussion "cage," (a hollowed-out cube containing a plethora of percussion devices) is much more successful, by turns beguiling, subtle and delicate.

Mutable 17515-2

<mutablemusic.com>

Richard Grooms

Jim Connolly and the Gove County String Quartet

Jim Connolly-contrabass

Sally Barr-violin

Kirsten Monke-violola

Laura Hackstein-violin

I wasn't that thrilled with the last Connolly project I reviewed (*Time Stops to Visit*) but I thought it had scads of promise. This outing goes a long way to fulfilling that promise. Fin de siecle Americana gets modern and cinematic on this record, a somewhat Kronos Quartet postmodernism crossed with quite a few strands from the homegrown warehouse: hymns, jazz, silent movie soundtracks, folk, Ben Johnston, and Dvorak's new world. It's a clear and powerful success. This group has helped Connolly to create a new type of American composition. Three, four, five cheers!

pfMENTUM

PFMCD 044

www.pfmentum.com

Richard Grooms

Pondfloorsample

Gen Ken Montgomery

Gen Ken Montgomery- electronics, tapes

It was all I could do to not fast forward through “Father Demo Swears,” but for some reason other than laziness I let it go and after awhile I even turned up the volume. That really helped. It would’ve helped more if I’d listened to it while drifting off to sleep at night with all the lights out (that works with Robert Ashley). It didn’t fit the bright green Spring day that was happening while I had it on. That’s not the record’s fault. Maybe it’s best to think of this duo-cd not as music, or sound art, but as one of those old Sound Effects LPs, inasmuch as Montgomery presents altered recordings of film projectors, fridges, radiators, bath drains, birds eating and so on. He admits he’s a “mad scientist” and he once released a cassette full of only static and hiss, so there’s sometimes (but not enough) a needed element of humor here. It’s worth at least one listen so it can open up small doors in your head, but the hour-long installation piece would defeat almost anyone’s resolve, and it takes up almost half the package. Most of the set takes a dim view of pleasure, a problem some musical modernism has had for too long.

XI Records

www.xirecords.org

Richard Grooms

Project Soundwave

Various Artists

Sound artists from the U.S., Europe and Canada contributed to the Project Soundwave festival in San Francisco last year. This cd is the document of that event. The liner notes are by turns intentionally and unintentionally funny. Some are clearly meant to be surrealist jokes. Quite a few read like mini dry tech manuals I've come to expect from some electronic experimental musicians' liner bits. Should it be a surprise that their music is often as wonky and humorless as their descriptions of it? But there's much to praise here, and you shouldn't let the Gradgrinds spoil it. Example: Neal Morgan's "Warm Fields-Alive and Awake Part 3." This maternal, soothing lullaby mimics the human heartbeat in ways that are comforting, bright and lively. Morgan says it's made to be listened too while you look at fields, but I say it's listening material while you're in the womb. Later on the disc "Baby Tigers" for modified typewriters provides a rhythm that's childlike and playful, making the most of its regular/irregular tension for a sweat-inducing, crazily textured ride. "Warm Fields-Alive and Awake Part 5" is another superb Morgan outing that's all too short. Like "Part 3," it's calming and weird all at once, as if that's the most natural thing in the world. "Slip" by Tim Gallagher skews pop song with nonsense syllables, backward tapes and accomplishes its mission with a result that emotionally connects with Morgan's cuts: restful and disorienting in a most enjoyable way. What a marvel it is: dream pop brought to you courtesy of parallel enfolded dimensions which nurse on our reality. It comes over like a track from a White Noise album that never was. HarS' "Les Annes Pop" uses historic broadcast material about the Kennedy assassination, massages the announcer's voices until they are completely unintelligible as words. But the inarticulate emotional residue is still there in the vocal noises. It's arresting and very haunting and makes you think of the way an alien might perceive our frailty. The large majority of tracks here are interesting, many are captivating, and some reach upward and touch raw beauty. A very few lapse and only get to be average techno. Overall, it's a recommended ride. It gives new life to the art of improvisation.

Me'diate Network

MN04-01-0

www.projectsoundwave.com

Richard Grooms

The Opium Wars

Cast: Jeff Webster (Manuel), Ed Araiza (Louie), K. Sanchez (Mariana), Lisa Vidal (Mariana), Ruth Maleczech (Amalia), Mary Shultz (Evelyn), Lola Pashalinshi (Dr. Stein)

Musicians: Ikue Mori (electric percussion), D.J. Olive (turntables), Tenko (voice), Margaret Parkins (cello), Zeena Parkins (sampler, electric harp), Joe Tramp (percussion), Chris Cochrane (guitar, voice), David Shea (turntables), D.D. Dorveillier (voice), Jonathan Bepler (voice)

The 17 pieces on this 71 minute audio CD present a radio play about ethnic life in Manhattan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Playright Ana Maria Simo uses poetry, ethnic vignettes, and argumentative dialogue to present the plight of a Cuban family that is destroyed by opium and the influx of Chinese immigrants. Music producer Zeena Parkins uses these artists and various musical sources to present a cacophonous musical soundtrack that reflects the turbulent lives of the characters in this play.

The music serves as background to the play and is heavily edited. It adds a powerful emotional subtext that amplifies what the characters in the play are going through emotionally. The music is mostly organized into short passages of the kind of experimental and extended technique music that you would come to expect from the downtown New York scene.

The actors deliver their lines very professionally and the writing is good. It is rare to hear a play that makes such extensive use of experimental writing techniques yet at the end you truly feel for the characters. It takes good actors to accomplish this. They show the emotions of desperate addicts quickly without making it appear to be campy or overly emotional. This is a radio play so everyone is close miked which lends itself to a feeling of intimacy with the characters as they interact with each other.

The artwork of the CD has a documentary motif. The J card features grainy, historical photos from the times and the CD itself has a line art image of a poppy (from which opium comes).

Overall, this CD has a nice theatrical experience to it. The combination of wild, "out-there" music and progressive, experimental theater yields a strong synergy in the hands of these excellent artists. Good work!

Glenn Engstrand

Trios for Deep Voices

Christopher Roberts

Roberts-double bass

Mark Morton-double bass

James Bergman-double bass

Roberts' inspiration for these trios is his immersion in New Guinean traditional music, though his own pieces sound nothing like New Guinean music. They are recognizably contemporary American classical music. "Kon Burunemo" could be an updated version of Dvorak's American quartet. "Flying" conveys the effort and the exultation of the act itself. The other three tracks come off as rather too severe for me. They don't have the almost homespun and naïve charm of the two works above. Advocates of mainstream American classical modernism will be more receptive to these. Roberts has a strong individual voice. If he repeats the idiosyncrasies of those pieces in the future he'll be a composer to reckon with.

Cold Blue

CB 0030

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Time Stories

**David Moss (drums, voice, percussion, electronics),
Heiner Goebbels (piano, keyboard, sampler),
Catherine Jauniaux (voice), |
Hans Peter Kuhn (sound artist),
Koichi Makigami (voice, mouth harp, conch shells, paper),
Christian Marclay (turntables, LPs),
Phil Minton (voice),
Frank Schulte (Turntables, LPs, Samplers, electronics)**

David Moss's records have always struck me as weird and wonderful, and this one is no exception. Featuring duos between Moss and each of the above players, the pieces are grouped into loose categories, (Chronicles, Cliffhangers), for added amusement. An earmark of good music for me is that I easily forget who, or what I'm listening to. It has no overarching agenda and no political affiliations. This CD bears all those merits. Each piece is completely different from the one before or after it. Cheesy rhythmic ditty gives way to squeaky voices and background clanking, joined by vocal drone/loop and scattered drumming.

Either all these people know each other very well, or they're just adept at picking just the right sound. I think my favourites are the duos with Makigami. 'Specific Tongue' has jaw harp and mutter-singing, accompanied by a drummachine beat. 'Shadowmmen' has the two shadowing each other with their voices, a sort of mock declamation in song. Or maybe a clipped and re-ordered opera, condensed into one minute and fifty five seconds.

All of the duos on the CD held my attention, and each served up surprises, even on second and third listening. I'd say if you're into any of these people, check it out. Additionally, the liner notes promise a live CD in future...David?

-jeph jerman

Intakt Records
P.O. Box 468
CH 8024 Zurich
Switzerland
www.intaktrec.ch
intakt@intaktrec.ch

below beyond above

Voice Crack

Andy Guhl (cracked everyday electronics),
Norbert Moeslang (cracked everyday electronics)

Swiss duo who play mostly invented devices constructed from cheap (?) electronic devices; toys, old circuits, radios...creating a severe yet oddly serene environment of crackles, beeps, loops of bumpy rhythms...this CD is pretty quiet compared to past works. These two often get lumped into the Noise camp, and to be fair, they've often collaborated with American wall-of-sound masters Borbetomagus, to make sprawling UR-symphonies, but here, things are almost pastoral. If this is a general trend for Voice Crack, I like it.

Separating it further from the 'noise as entertainment' aesthetic, this music is not just mashed together willy-nilly, but definitely sounds crafted, carved from piles of old parts. Moeslang-Guhl have discovered other uses for cast-off devices, and to prove the

worth of said uses, they carefully add detail on detail to make their own sonic environments. I can't think of anything to compare this soundmaking to, though it may have correlates within the computer/electronic minimalist school that's become so popular in recent years. It just doesn't cost as much. Or sound as sterile.

There's an odd warmth here that causes me to re-listen, and I believe I'd do so even if I were not a big Voice Crack fan.

-jeph jerman

Uhang Production
Steigerstr. 8
CH-9000 St. Gallen
Switzerland

PRIMAL COMMUNICATION

Contemporary Solo Percussion

Tatsuya Nakatani



This latest release by Tatsuya Nakatani is a *beautiful, transfixing, work of art*. One straight track of 57'34", no over dubbing or editing, recorded on July 2007 at H& H Production studio.

The magic begins as a wash of sound from seeming deep space consciousness blending a slow paced, but mighty bath of vibratory surge. Vast like the ocean, these deep and multiple pitched frequencies emanate from bowing of cymbals. Nakatani is surely the master of bowed metallics, as he stretches from the sounds of the universe to the vocalizations and emanations of animals, mysterious voices, seamlessly appearing from the void, only then does he introduce the distant drumming, the low thunder of the double bass drums that permeates the cosmic texture with the double pulse of the heartbeat becoming the weather of the mind. Seemlessly these rich sound bodies roll and plane in aural time until the lifting and disappearance of these metallic vibrations end like a river fading into the distance. A beautiful masterpiece, an artist creation, boxed in a wallet with fantastic poitret rendering of Nakatani, graphic design and

Tatsuyanakatani Music and Sounds, BMI 2007

H&H Production HH-8

www.hhproduction.org

Easton, Pennsylvania, USA

August 10, 2001

Review of Tatsuya Nakatani 鹿 s, Green Report 9 recorded at Studio 234
in
Cambridge, Mass April 4, 2001
38 minutes

Drums are not always perceived as tonal instruments but in the hands
of
Tatsuya Nakatani they can add orchestral brilliance to any group.
This solo
percussion however, stands on its own as Mr. Nakatani draws out every
register and timbre on his set. I am compelled to follow the length
of each
phrase, alerted by sudden rolls and changes of sound. I imagine the
placement of instruments within this solid architecture and can feel
myself
dancing within its space.

Tatsuya Nakatani is a methodical musician concerned with the
development of
an idea in time. His beginnings are arresting; his endings are
satisfying.
The right duration and variety of events are fully charged with a
visceral
intensity that can captivate a true listener. Ideas move slowly and
are
sustained into rapid motion, rolls, and varied sounds with whole
sections
of bells, gongs, and singing bowed cymbals. At times the drum set is
reduced
to just a few sounds like a single bounce of a stick floating before
it
falls. All this hits me like a vibrating temple of metal – a sense of
vastness in a small room, and the variety of sounds Mr. Nakatani

derives
from the cymbals is suprising. The music is clear. This CD merits
close
listening. It will purify any space.

– Eric
Zinman –

Limn

Nakatani Chen Duo

Tatsuya Nakatani-percussion

Audrey Chen-cello, voice

Susan Alcorn-pedal steel guitar

If it's dramatic sweep you want this is a more than fine place to start. Chen is one of the leading practitioners of extended vocal techniques, if this album is representative. She can convey wonder, pain, mystery and so much else it'd take a small encyclopedia to describe it all. Nakatani's a highly sensitive partner and commands a panoply of percussion devices with utmost effectiveness and imagination. Some of the tracks here were recorded live in various Southern cities in 2005. Wish they'd come to Birmingham, but there's always the future, innit? Meanwhile, the chthonic reigns on this disc. That's not an unusual thing for a free improv group to pull off, but this duo/trio do it as well as anyone, and of course Alcorn is a wonder-worker.

www.hhproductions.org

HH-6

Richard Grooms

Review of a visit to Toronto:
Improv meeting at Victory Restaurant
Tuesday Sept 5, 2000

Kurt Newman- solo guitar

From sparse introductions converging into interesting personal tonalities and languaging for guitar, electric frazzles transforming sound in a slow rise of intensity, cry baby gets a new meaning. Coaxing an expression dry and fragile as rare mosses (music) growing on a riverbank, speaking silently as the wilderness night sounds. From a hollow bodied electric, **Kurt Newman** coaxes a variety of sounds in hammering, stroking, rubbing, fingerings and placements, creating a contrapuntal deluge of simultaneous musical noise, harmonics, and sound events. One of the most interesting new stylists I've heard in a long time.

John Oswald-alto saxophone, Allison Cameron-assorted things, Mike Genera- **drums**

Splashes of percussion, understated saxophone, contact mics on enigmatic objects, and exploring the territory gradually. Genera was extremely interesting to watch. His actions were very alert almost like he was about to bust forth with energy, always poised for the next attack. It was the point of poise that I found so captivating, although his accents and punctuation were varietal and well placed. Contrast that with the enormous understatement of Oswald and Cameron-- John with a tee shirt stuffed down the bell of the horn, Cameron leaning intently over the two boxes and processor, as she fiddled with a contact mic on the table, providing a subtle background of white noise. Layer that with Oswald's deceptive vocal feedback through the horn. The music reminded me of the biological level, elements of heat, atomic particles swarming around a center, a nucleus, noticeably responsive and alive.

LaDonna Smith, yes, that was me, too tranced out to remember anything other than playing **solo viola**, and in trio with **Angelique von Berlo-accordion** and **John Oswald-alto saxophone** wrapping up the gig, in a sonority discussion that culminated in a rousing groove.

-LS

Accidents With Nature

Harris Newman- gr., lapsteel

Bruce Cawdron- perc., glockenspiel

For most of my life I've been enamored of the nuevo folk Takoma label that came out of the 60s. Newman takes that sound (especially the John Fahey element) with its blending of American folk and Middle Eastern harmonics and reshapes it. The instruments used are acoustic, but Newman and Cawdron sometimes make them sound electronic, apparently with tape manipulation. It's all pretty Fahey-esque until "It's a Trap" introduces more idiosyncratic sound suggesting plaintive, prairie-like psychic landscapes. From here on, this is the shape of the album. Newman is with this cd still somewhat under Fahey's shadow, but a good two-thirds of the material here show him claiming a plot of land as his own- a darker, moodier, lonelier place than the Takoma boys have. It's worth your time.

Strange Attractors

SA H029

P.O. Box 13007

Portland, Oregon 97213-0007

www.strange.atractors.com

Richard Grooms

Rick Cox

Maria Falling Away

Rick Cox- elec. guitar, prepared elec. guitar, baritone elec.
guitar,
alto sax, contra-alto clarinet, sampler

Guest artists (each on one track only):

Jon Hassell- trumpet

Thomas Newman- piano

Jeff Elmassion- clarinet
Chas Smith- pedal steel gtr.

Here are six compositions (with some apparent improv) by Cox and others in duet format. On unusual occasions the Cold Blue esthetic can lapse into blandness, and the first three pieces here wouldn't be out of place on Music from the Hearts of Space. Which is a disappointment, knowing how much more Cox is usually capable of. 13 minutes into "The Years in Streams" and I was still waiting for it to take off. There's a lot of tapioca-like material here that just seems unending. This cd takes no risks (and risk is something Cold Blue excels at) and is almost unremittingly boring. But don't let it deter you from other Cox cd's which are vastly better than this one.

Cold Blue

CB 0006

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Light That Fills The World

John Luther Adams

Marty Walker- bass clarinet

Amy Knoles-vibes and marimba

Bryan Pezzone-piano

Nathaniel Reichman- elec. keyboards, sound design

Robin Lorentz-violin

Barry Newton-double bass

Three compositions by Adams that confirm his marvelous, chilly sense of northern space. “Farthest Place” is a lush, brightly elegant, somewhat Steve Reichian piece that puts the listener firmly in the arctic, the keyboardists and Knoles providing a luminous bed of rhythms. A bright discovery. The title work is less sumptuous than this because it’s mysterious and withholds something. But it’s just as enjoyable and near-zero. “Immeasurable Space of Tones” is somewhere between the first and second pieces, again filling the listener with a sense of great space, cold and wonder. In fact all three tracks seem like parts of a larger piece. Their titles don’t exaggerate, and they would, like many Cold Blue releases, appeal to fans of holy minimalism, even though I haven’t seen any info that specifically indicates that any of the label’s composers are mystics.

Cold Blue

CB 0010

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Descansos, Past

Jim Fox

Barry Newton- double bass
Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick- cello
Jessica Catron- cello
Aniela Perry- cello
Rachel Arnold- cello

“Descanso” is Spanish for rest, peace and quiet and those words give a rough description of the music on this cd single. Newton’s strong, stately bass supports and departs from the able cellos, and the whole adds up to austere beauty. This platter does suggest a place of calm, but the emotions connected with lamentation, penitence and sorrow are also in play here. A fine record is the result.

Cold Blue
CB 0021
www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

JAMAICA CD

Post Prandials

Keith Nicolay - guitars
Sabir Mateen - tenor sax, clarinet
John Burgos - synths

There's never been any doubt (in my mind) that Nicolay is the *mayor* of wack-city! He first started sending me review material in the early '90's, & I (in the strictest sense of improvised musics) it FILLED THE BILL! This outing is just as outrageous as you'd expect, but it shows a growth often unfulfilled in groups/artists of this nature. Any good improvised session demands random, & that's delivered up in doses that are probably ILLEGAL in most states. The maturity is displayed in a very relaxed approach to the music - no dead space, stays thoroughly engaging, but the pace clearly illustrates the kind of familiarity and sensitivity needed to paint sonic images (somehow, tho', I don't think you'll see TOO many Jamaicans dancin' to THIS beat). This music is, for lack of better

words - *almost accessible*... meaning that it's still clearly improvised, but laid-back enough for even the uninitiated to enjoy. One of the most enjoyable phreak sessions I've ever listened through... & you MUST listen all the way through it! Gets my MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED rating.

-Rotcod Zzaj

POST PRANDIALS
c/o R. Keith Nicolay
1953 65th St, Apt 2E
Brooklyn, NY 11204

Lucas Niggli and Sylvie Courvoisier

Lucas Niggli - drums

Sylvie Courvoisier - piano

This music immediately struck a chord of awe in me. Grand sonorities consisting of single tones and after resonance, space and durations of resonances. A sudden and surprising wash as a cymbal splash becomes soaked with harmonic timbers. Howlings from the piano, a wash of suspended metals, sustained intensity and resolve. The abstractions become colors, events, expressions of the subtle bodies of the instruments resurrected with new voices, carefully and cautiously stepping into the next dimension.

The sheer beauty of this recording, the exacting precision of sustained time, every gesture is placed to sit alone in the spotlight of eternity's grand silence.

I've hear nothing til now as fresh and colorful, as original, indeed turning a new era of musical mastery as the personal expression of the universe is divined through these musicians. One of the most profound recordings of our time.

-LaDonna Smith

Moon Dog Girl

Elliot Sharp guitar, 12 string guitar, baritone guitar, Hawaiian guitar, 6 string bass, bass clarinet, alto sax
John Kruth mandolin, steel body mandolin, mandocello, flute, pennywhistle, lira harmonica sheng
Jonathan Segal violin, guitar, piano, mandocello, dulcimer
Atilla Engin percussion, ektara, voice

Note for you aspiring bands:

While it's artsy and hip to put out a CD with a generic art-based or blank CD into a jacket. At this writing I was fearful that I would not be able to find the right cover jacket , so I'd know if I was writing about the same band I was listening to. You know, I left the CD in the player for 2 days, and when I went back, I had no clue what it was. Please put your name or a title on the discs. Us reviewers get 100's of these things...and they do all look alike unless they are identified. -CC

This CD begins with an interesting mix of instrumentation with a very active flute, violin, drums and bass guitar in a spirited rock improv jam. The 2nd cut opens more abstractly. At first I think the group is really going to launch some free playing, but it transitioned, as the "intro" again became rock improv. This one hinted of an irish feeling, but grew into a metallic overlay pretty quickly...

This band is cool, creating improv jam always melding one style into another. Some witty and jagged guitar along with the flute playing and violin make this improv a creative and downright interesting listening experience. Most of this music, in rockband tradition, has beat orientation and is dancable. I do like it alot.

-Chaz Carpenter

Peering Over

edgewalker experimental instruments consort

Doug Carroll (sonic ray), Ted Dutcher (techphonic plate), Glen Engstrand (north star), Jim Hearon (crustacean), Ed Herrmann (t-rodimba), Gary Knowlton (techphonic plate), Mihai Manoliu (bug), Lisa Moskow (11 trees), Vinny Nicastro (t-rodimba), Tom Nunn (bat), Randy Porter (bug), Garth Powell (beetle), Moe Staiano (techphonic plate 1, drums), Peter Valsamis (techphonic plate, drums), William Winant (crab).

This CD presents a performance by a large group utilizing instruments designed and built by Tom Nunn. Some of the pieces are written, or maybe directed, by different members of the ensemble, while others are free improvisations. The liner notes state that the instruments are, for the most part, new to these players, which I feel lends a feeling of discovery to the music. The instruments in question are odd beasts indeed. Electro-acoustic Percussion Boards are plywood sheets with various soundmaking devices attached, which are struck, scraped, plucked, strummed, rubbed or bowed to produce mettalic timbres and voice-like sounds.

Space Plates are stainless steel sheets to which are welded lengths of bronze brazing rod, placed to facillitate two-handed bowing. The plates rest on inflated ballons in small buckets, giving the whole a very resonant sound. Balloon/Slap Drums are PVC pipes of various lengths, with either balloon or cardboard heads. Each set of drums has 26 different tube lengths.

The music itself is sometimes reminiscent of Harry Partch's music, or the metal sound sculptures of Harry Bertoia, with a myriad of pitches and timbres colliding. Some pieces are mostly percussion/rhythm based, and others are more ethereal. It all sounds quite human though, and quite coherent and organized for a bunch of people playing instruments they are not completely familiar with.

The recording is an 'open air[[job, capturing the sounds of the instruments in the room, and while it is clean and pleasant, I do wish that the individual voices of the instruments were clearer. It also would be great to have a few photos to gaze at while this completely original music is playing on my stereo, but I'm nitpicking. (If you're interested in Tom Nunn's creations, pick this up and then spring for a copy of the 'Gravichords, Whirlies and Pyrophones book and CD set put together by Bart Hopkins. It features a solo recording of Nunn, along with a clear photo of several instruments.)

-jeph jerman

Exsanguinette and the Creek Don't Rise

Liz Albee- trumpet, shell, electronics
B. Deiler- drums
Killick Hinds- guitar, electronics, voice
Larry Ocha- tenor, soprano saxes
D. Porter- voice

If I misspelled any of the above info I offer apologies. The liner notes are very small-even with a magnifying glass. Same issue with the song titles only much more so.

This isn't gas music from Jupiter, it's post-everything music from Georgia. Blisteringly loud jazz-related material is here, and it's okay I suppose, but it's the watery/gargley/grunting content that is much more novel. It's funny, too, which is

always welcome in the free improv corner of the world. There's a cut that gradually becomes the Tibetan monks with the ultra-long trumpets and all that melds with a sort-of jazz big band. It sounds unworkable on paper but it succeeds totally. On another track a cookie monster does a moody soul-funk outing; this one is good campy noise and a fine parody of adolescent gothic rock. Later on hip-hop and current dance music are put to surprising uses. A frequently successful pomo diversion, this album has plenty that rises and makes a fine mess.

Solponticello
S7 025

Richard Grooms

LOST ART CAFE

CD

Oddbar Trio plus Trombone

Brent Sandy, trumpet, flugelhorn, pocket trumpet

John Rapson, trombone

Steve Grismore, guitar

Jim Dreier, drums, percussion

This CD kicks off with some funk-based jazz ("Cletus Ngugu") that's high-energy & VERY pleasant to listen to. Reminded me of some of the earlier Miles experiences. Crisply executed horn runs & sweet guitar chording as a part o' th' riff kept th' "move" rollin' relentlessly. Title track was a nice round of improvised (tho' low noise) pandemonium, something to be remembered. Dreier's percussion is EXCELLENT on this cut, with the horns sorta' revolving in, around & through the piece. I also enjoyed track 8 ("A Call for all Demons"), bluesy with an edge. Very well recorded album with many high points... the players are intently focused on each other, communicating their sonic visions effortlessly. Many moods on the even dozen cuts. Some might not classify this as improv, as it's not (totally) "out", but from that standpoint, it clearly merits a **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** from us. **Rotcod Zzaj**

9winds

POB 10082

Beverly Hills, CA 90213

<http://members.aol.com/ninewinds>

Accordion Koto

Pauline Oliveros / Miya Masaoka

Oliveros- accordion
Masaoka- koto

I can honestly tell you there are rich storehouses of improvisation here. Oliveros' accordion has long since broken the boundaries of what we expect from the instrument; indeed, it's become a sort-of small orchestra in itself. Masaoka has exploded the constraints of the koto as well; it only occasionally recalls the instrument we know so well. The two create an enormously wide panoply of aural possibilities for the ears. Cloud-like, yet articulate. Quicksilver, and yet it slows down to let you notice its details. A heady brew. The two players have snagged the uncatchable and offered it to us in their hands. Strings, buttons, resonating chambers and wood touch the infinite.

Deep Listening
DL 36-2007
www.deeplistening.org

Richard Grooms

New Ways to Criticize

Opaque

CON 008

(personnel not listed)

Finally, something that'll really clear the air. The factory makes no noise at night

when you shut it down and leave it. Or does it? Contained within are the sounds that the factory might make on its own with no humans around and only itself to please. Gentle Borbetomagus, in other words. A blurb enclosed says it's off the rails but I don't think it was ever on. I particularly enjoy "The No-Nonsense Blood Smeared Pajamas" where the electronics suggest a type of Indonesian gamelan which in turn suggests a delicate walking machine coming to life (the factory coming into its own). There are fierce sounds here as well as delicate passages, as in "I sank my town for you" which recalls a lonely electronic buoy. It needs to be said that this cd fooled me. After awhile I thought it had long since ended. What I took for ambient electrical noises in my building was just the platter continuing on. Talk about blending in. (Eno was smiling somewhere). It was only when the musicians got rowdy again that I realized the cd hadn't finished. Upstaged again.

www.consume.freeseerve.co.uk

Richard Grooms

A Sweet Quasimodo Between Black Vampire Butterflies For Maybeck

Charlemagne Palestine

Charlemagne Palestine- piano, voice, brandy snifter

Charlemagne Palestine has never moved me. His brand of minimalism has been of such an extreme sort that it has seemed almost inert. But I feel differently about him now after hearing this live concert recorded in Berkeley. After a brief and effective preparatory section where Palestine wordlessly vocalizes while rubbing his wet fingers on a brandy snifter, he launches into about 35 minutes of solo piano. A long, slowly building performance is marked by several gradually developing ascending, descending, curling, and arching lines. These improvisations have a diamond-like sculptural quality- glittering, light-filled and hard, making for pared-down, aristocratic minimalism. The structure of Palestine's lines is clear and open, ready for the ear and mind to examine and revel in. A few days after listening to this I was in a building where, a couple of floors down, a man was tuning a piano. He spent over forty-

five minutes going slowly up the keyboard from the low to high keys. The tuner exhausted the patience of every listener in the building except me and maybe himself. It sounded to me like a beautiful, meditative act and I think this is largely due to how Palestine opened up my ears to the detail a piano can offer in the right hands, even in the hands of a tuner. (Incidentally, for the first time I heard Palestine's speaking voice on this record, where he introduces and makes concluding remarks about the concert and various things. I was surprised to find out that he sounds much like Truman Capote).

Cold Blue CB 0025

www.coldbluemusic.com

Sandbox Trio

Urubamba

Martin Birke- octapad, perc., drums, keyboards

Chuck Ellis- lap steel gtr., fretless bass, thwackoleum, loops, tapes

Daniel Panasenکو- classical and prepared gtrs., pvc sax, elec. erhu, clay flute, perc.

Sort of group of improv tone-poems about the Urubamba river in South America, these pieces frequently shade into New Age music. When it's not patchouli wallpaper it's not bad at all; in fact, it can be very good indeed. It rises to this level about 25% of the time. Not a high rate, but if they could maintain it for a whole album I'd welcome it with open arms. And that raises a question: If you can do that level work, why bother with New Age? So Echoes will program it?

CD FMA 0414

Frank Mark Arts

www.frank-mark-arts.com

Richard Grooms

Partitas For Long Strings

Paul Panhuysen

Long String installation

3 long tracks of very long string performances. Each cut is about 20 minutes. The installation features 16 meter-long strings. The first part: the strings have the same pitch. Second part: strings are of different lengths, and hence have different tunings. Third part: midway between these two approaches. Plus, there is overtracking on much of the recording. All are arranged and played by Dutch composer Panhuysen, although the term "composer" (or "player," for that matter) is one he'd reject, because he feels he has only a limited influence on the strings. He strokes, then, the strings. This with rosin'd hands. Track one is similar to listening to a pleasing powerline that has a little more tonal variation than any powerline you've likely come across. Cut two is harsher and reminds me of a typical section of music by Penderecki, only more austere. At other times, it has the feel of a Stephen Scott bowed piano piece, only more severe and unvarying. I'm a big fan of Scott, but on the harmony-noise continuum, this is much closer to the noise end. There's not as much variation here, because, unlike Scott's works, which are usually for groups, there's only one player here, and so there are fewer strings to alter, even with the overdubs. In giving up a lot of control, Panhuysen has left a lot to the chance sounds coming from his instrument. A non-human result is what the listener ends up with, at least most of the time. He achieves a dramatic range of harmonics, though. Like Borbetomagus, it's difficult to stand outside this music: you're just in it, a very overwhelming and sometimes shocking experience. For this reason, it's not something that I'd want to listen to often. But I'm glad it's there. I imagine it would be stunning live. The thing it most sounds like, in the final analysis, is the Voyager space recordings of cosmic radiation, solar winds, planetary magnetospheres, and the like. This is, as I've said, non-human sounding stuff. So I can say that Panhuysen's strings are in touch with, if not the musical world, the music of the spheres.

Richard Grooms

Experimental Intermedia
PO Box 1754
Canal St. Station
NY, NY 10013

Dancing in Place

Elizabeth Panzer - harp

With works by: Elizabeth Panzer, Eleanor Hovda, Eve Beglarian, Kitty Brazelton, Wendy Chambers, Gustavo Matamoros, Richard Einhorn,

Elizabeth asks,

"Did you know there are some people who do not like the harp?"

Well, having been one of them, because for so long the harp repertoire seemed limited to insidious romantics and sweeping arpeggios, I now stand back with fresh ears and anticipation as one by one, Elizabeth introduces some of the most substantial and refreshing new repertoire that the harp has received in a long time. And this is an accomplishment in itself.

Having invited Kitty Brazelton, Wendy Chambers, Gustavo Matamoros, Richard Einhorn, and others to participate in new commissioned harp pieces, utilizing structures and improvisation, new acoustic techniques and electronics, the result is outstanding. I especially loved the piece **"Re: Elizabeth"** by Gustavo Matamoros where Elizabeth plays on 2 tracks some very contrasting voices. The opening of Kitty Brazelton's **"Down n Harp n All a Rond o"** really captivates me although there is a share of some of those "tasteless glissandos". The piece has an exotic rhythm and form, with the expectant intensity of a "hunt", exploring and waiting. **"New Pages"** by Richard Einhorn was a beautiful mesmeristic rhythmic vamp that more or less transported me to the realm of daydreaming and magic, a state of imagining, **"Moments"** by Wendy Chambers had a similar effect with its mesmeristic repeated phrases evoking mystery and mood, folksy, enchanted, and wonderful in a more traditional ilk, although containing a few startling cadences.

All in all, I believe Panzer has through these commissions, coaxed out some of the best harp music of the millennium. **Dancing in Place** is truth of the title.

-LaDonna Smith

O.O. Discs
261 Groovers Ave.
Black Rock CT 06605-3452
<http://www.hear.com/o.o/>
Celli005@aol.com

"Forgetting and Remembering"

Robert Paredes clarinet, electronic tape

I like the way Paredes describes it himself:

"Both works on this disc are compositions/improvisations originally committed directly to tape. I think of them variously as a kind of painting or drawing (or writing) in which the surface of the tape constitutes a repository (not unlike a canvas) for etchings or inscriptions; traces of tactile energies and shapes (gestures and levels of pressure) to be retraced as sound via the means of playback equipment... Altogether, an unfolding of different past-past-sounds speaking to one another within a present. How, I wonder, would it be (actually) to experience it this way?"

"Forgetting and Remembering" is seven simultaneously sounding clarinet improvisations, recorded one track at a time on a single 8 track tape. Each one made on a different day. Each one made without having listened to any whole or part of a previous performance in order that I might have access to the past only through memory."

#17 (Speakers):[in every moment{of}decay]...for 2 channel tape

"Tape music made in the old style from the sounds of analog electronics, clarinet, kalimba, and assorted noise makers wherein "decay" as a connotative signifier informs the music at levels large and small..." RP The piece grows as it decays , drones, electronic washes and mixtures.."From this layered and leveled world of sound, I can infer the inevitable decay of ways of creating , teaching, interacting...The inevitable decay of mediums of expression of passe technology operating at the edge of broken down...of non-conductive patch cords failing to enable the breathing of a circuit ((the emergence of a thought)), of painful surges from nowhere in particular)...the inevitable decay of the human body, of human connection, one to the other, possible only, yet doomed, through bodies...of dreams now nearly quiet, and in every moment of decay i can, as well, infer the sound(s) of an inevitable and beautiful resistance thereto(o)."

I loved this piece!

-Chaz Currier

American Composers Forum
332 Minnesota St. E-145
St. Paul, MN 55101
<http://www.composersforum.org>
innova@composersforum.org

Purple Wind

Philip Gelb- shakuhachi, electronics
Gino Robair- perc., toy horns, rubble
Miyo Masaoka- koto
Dana Reason- piano
Shaking Ray Levis:
 Dennis Palmer- electronics
 Bob Stagner- electronics

There are back recesses of the mind you thought were unreachable, that went away when you woke up. If you did recollect anything of them it's frustratingly fragmentary. Somehow these folks dove in and brought back the goods and had the musical ability to present it all and wrestle with too without pretense or self-indulgence. Doesn't seem easy, but they brought 'em back alive.

Ryokan Recordings

Ryokan 1

Richard Grooms

Bremen To Bridgewater

Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath

The Britcrits went gaga over this one and well they should have. Live 1971 and 1975 top drawer British jazz avant players (Elton Dean, Mongezi Feza, Louis Moholo, Evan Parker, Dudu Pukwana, McGregor and 11 others) are at their energized peak here. This is an absolute mother lode of white hot jazz. Do not let it slip by. Please do not. I thank you.

Cuneiform/Rune 182/183
<cuneiformrecords.com>

Richard Grooms

Cinnamon Sphere

Sarah Peebles - computer assisted performance, sho

Nilan Perera - altered electric guitar and effects

Chung Gong Ha - calligraphy performance

"A Korean-influenced calligraphy performance and soundscape cinematic ritual performance for the eyes and ears"...

A distant and sparcely punctuated expanse of electronic alterations and effects, colors and grainy textures, dripping water effects, unfold slowly.

An ambience music which conjures environmental inspiration from urban trenches to crickets to space dust.

-Chaz Currier

Studio Excelo

50 Eaton Ave.

Toronto, Ontario

M4J 2Z5 Canada

www.interlog.com/~speeb

Whose forest?(CD)

Oliver Schroer and Stewed Tomatoes,

NOMA with Michael Ondaatje,

NEXUS, Cinnamon Sphere with Jin Hi Kim,

Ko Ishiawa, Handslang, George Gao/Lui, Tian-Hua

Richard Windeyer, Wende Bartley, The Kavkasia Trio,

Sarah Peebles, Wang Zheng Ting, Robert Cruickshank,

Whose Forest is a compilation CD conceived by musician/activist Sarah Peebles as a vehicle for raising public awareness of the Ontario government's "Lands for Life" program, and it's potentially catastrophic effect on land usage in the province. Some 40 musicians, jazz, and avant-garde artists from Canada and abroad came together in this compilation to protest the massive clearcutting of Canadian forests in upper Ontario. A year later the legislation was passed, and a good deal of Ontario has been designated parkland in perpetuity, thanks in part to the effort of the Partnership for Public lands (the recipient of all proceeds from the CD). It is possible that "Whose Forest" made a significant contribution to the process. For updates on "Lands for Life" legislation, visit the Partnership for Public Lands site at: www.web.net/wild and the Ontario government site at www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/lfl.

Opening the CD are **Oliver Schroer and the "Stewed Tomatos"** in an awesome North American Indian inspired camp song which also incorporates string violect, lpulse drum, trumpet and trumpet cloud. **NOMA** with a spoken word poet Michael Ondaatje conducts a very expressive free improvisation from a large orchestra. Environmental sounds and computer-interactive ambient music are introduced in Richard Windeyer's *"Postcard from Oxbow Lake"*. Ishikawa Ko plays the Japanese Shoe on "Blue Moon Spirit, composed by **Sarah Peebles**. The electroaccoustic "Sparkling Crystal Moistness" is a composition developed by Wende Bartley. There is a traditional sacred chorale of the **KAVKASIA Trio from Alan Gasser, Carl Linich, and Stuart Gelzer, who specialized and performed music from the Republic of Georgia.** George Gao from Shanghai performs on erhu. There is traditional folk music from Wang Zheng Ting. "The Birds" performed by William Cahn by NEXUS, The Cinnamon Sphere with Jin Hi Kim on electric kummungo, electro-accoustic tape by Robert Cruickshank dedicated to "those who never set foot in tan unmanaged forest", and "So Fir Fell" was created especially for **WHOSE FOREST**. Lori Freeman contributes a provocative bass clarinet solo entitled "**Four Ways Home**" and finally, "**Silent Witness**" was created by HANDSLAG which includes **Rob Clutton -accoustic bass, NiLan Perera-guitar, and John Lenraed-voice.**

With such a variety of international music and creative voices, this CD holds its own in terms of substance, source, and creativity. Very profound music to listen to, as it conjures many references of the sacredness and soul of the land.

-LaDonna Smith

**Hornblower Recordings
Box 265, Station E
Toronto M6H 4E2 CANADA
hornblower@interlog.com**

Nickendes Perlgras - “Die hintere Vase”

Michael Anderson - Trompete

Michael Thieke - Altsaxophon, Altklarinette, Klarinette

Eric Schaefer - Schlagzeug

I read that this, the debut release of Nickendes Perlgras, is “by far the most interesting project within the Berlin scene.” These musicians are versed in tradition as well as free improvised music.

You are allowed an opportunity to share with each musician on an individual basis, and also a group as a whole.

An energetic set of improvisation, packed full of “bizarre-cheeky” grooves and twists, leaving the listener anticipating what is right around the corner! - Robin Taylor

JazzHausMusik, Venloerstr, 40, 50672 Köln; Tel +49 221 952994 50; Fax +49 221 952994 90; e-mail - jhm@jazzhausmusik.de; <http://jazzhausmusik.de>

Buddy Systems

Gino Robair- perc., theremin, etc.

Here Robair sallies trios and duets with a cast of ten others.

Rationality: Robair wants to stomp that sucker flat. He does that here in “Tangle”

with John Butcher and Tim Perkins and in “Inappropriations” with Otomo Yoshihide.

Heavy electronic skronking contained within. A dramatic switch is evident in “Black Scales”

which reveals an introspective side to Robair & Co. The first duet with violinist Ladonna Smith conjures up large buzzing insects involved in rituals known only to themselves, but these provide auditory pleasure to humans. Called “Mysterious Vision”, it earns the title in spades.

(Full disclosure: Smith is my editor/publisher). “Sklarking”, another one with Smith, also comes out of far left field and is also proudly weird. Yoshihide brings high-test strangeness

back toward the end of the album with his turntables and CD player arsenal.

Not all cuts provide interest on this outing, but the ones that hit home make it more than worth the listen or two.

Meniscus Records
3010 Hennepin Ave. South, Suite 217
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Richard Grooms

CD

HV West

Charles Peris, sax & flutes **Bruno Steffen**, piano

Herbert Kramis, bass **Mark Huber**, drums

This is THE best jazz/improv quartet I've heard in 2000! It's not just that their groove is tight (which it CERTAINLY is)... it's because they are able to paint brand new horizons in each & every composition (while staying clearly in the realm of "music"). Charles Peris flute playing (probably) has a lot to do with that, but all 4 musicians show themselves to be fully accomplished & sensitive to their surroundings. Don't let that keyword (sensitive) give you the impression that they can't "improv", though.. Track 4, "Big Bang", tho' very short (1:10), & the title track, "Zunder", show just how stellar & free they can be! Exceptional recording, high talent & an abundance of energy blend to provide an album that reflects all the good things improvised jazz should be. Bound to become a classic, this rates a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, without qualification.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Unit Records
POB 53
CH-179 Lugnorre
Switzerland

From Shelter

Steve Peters

Peters- piano

Marghreta Cordero- voices

Alicia Ultan- violas

Another Cold Blue single here. This one has two compositions by Peters on it. “Three Short Stories” is a sort of 20th century update of a baroque solo string essay. Ultan’s viola playing is assured throughout and the piece has an enjoyable stateliness to it. On “My Burning Skin to Sleep” Peters multitracks piano and vocals for a mystery-laden lullaby. It’s restive like the first track and it seems to know you’ve been through tragedies and offers a fine place to convalesce. I can’t say it’s healing music without risking cliché, but just ignore that old cliché and take my word for it: it’s very therapeutic and not bland in any way. It has a lot to offer the body and the mind in it.

Cold Blue

CB 0018

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Quartet Solo Series

Marina Peterson

Phillip Schultz

Jonathan Chen

Andrew DeWar

Four very extreme solo pieces, and they're evaluated below:

Marina Peterson / athens.s / for cello, paper clips, sticks

Peterson effectively gets you to focus on small details, tiny things, the possibilities of the very small. Floorboards creaking, doors opening and similar mundane things are transformed into much more than just random, uninteresting sound.

Phillip Schulze / Cause Unfold Proceed II / for electronics

This sortie comes across like a machine trying to communicate with humans. We can't understand it, but the effort the machine put into it was interesting and more than welcome. That machine probably has a rich life of its own when we're not hanging around.

Jonathan Chen / Drummer / for electronics

Basically one ongoing, virtually unchanging drone. Sound this limited pretty much made me feel like an irrelevant party. If La Monte Young's 60s group's drones were too maximal for you, you may latch onto this in a big way.

Andrew Dewar / Diptych / for soprano sax

A worthy entry in the genre where a sax is conceived of as a piece of metal capable of making sounds that don't sound recognizably saxophone-like at all.

Striking Mechanism

SM 0001

Richard Grooms

Trignition

Barre Phillips (contrabass),

Bertram Turetzky (contrabass),

Vinny Golia (Eb, Bb, bass & contra-bass clarinets, soprano & baritone saxophones, suonas)

Very solid landscapes conjured up by these three. Follow the leader, or we're all the leader, or...some space for short solos and much attentive listening. Some attempts at inventing lines or themes are circumvented, to good results. Storytime in the nursery or a dark tale around the campfire, it's the same story to the trio. The parts I like the most don't go on long enough and leave me waiting through the sing-songy stuff to get to more ear-pulling. That's just me though, and when I remind myself that I should maybe just listen, I enjoy it all. The singers, the song and the sounds that they are sounding.

jeph jerman

9Winds
PO Box 10082
Beverly Hills CA 90213
members@aol.com/ninewinds/

FROGGIN' AROUND

CD

Chris McCann-Billy Pierce Trio

Chris McCann, drums
Billy Pierce, Tenor & Soprano sax
Steve Wallace - bass

McCann's drums shine on this CD in from Creative Improvised Music projects. There's no slouchin' from the saxes or backin' off on th' bass, either! From the standpoint of improv, however, the focus seems to be on Pierce's sax playing... not that that's a "bad" thing; but (at times), it's almost like he's the only one playing (even tho' that's not the reality of it). One unique thing was hearing someone (Billy) "scatting" in the background... neat, 'coz it reminded me of some of the way-early albums I hear Roland Kirk play on. Extended listening reveals that what's really goin' on with this group is a kinda' "circular solo", in which each instrument take a brief solo stint & eventually passes it back to Pierce. Would I classify it as improvised music? Nearly; tho' it treads closely around the flagpole of conventional jazz. From THAT perspective, it is an EXCELLENT musical experience that many "straight" jazzheads will fall in love with immediately. If you're looking for genuinely high-energy improv, this gets a RECOMMENDED rating from me. **-Rotcod Zzaj**

Creative Improvised Music Projects
The Cadence Building
Redwood, NY 13679
USA

Larry Polansky

Four-Voice Canons

15 imaginative variations in the realm of canon, a type of composition where the writer gradually adds layers of musical material, creating density, complexity and texture. "Anna Canon" features Polansky's 3 year old daughter's voice processed through a pc. This delightful cut prompted my cat to come over to the right speaker and cock her head at it in Nipper fashion. It's the sound of elemental spirits having fun and one of the best pieces I've heard from anyone in years. "#4" for marimba, played by William Winant, gradually becomes more rhythmically rich as it develops, sounding like more-accessible Conlon Nancarrow. "Nerve Canon" might be called the Procession of the Pachyderm Machines because of its elephantine assuredness. Elsewhere, Anthony Braxton and a field recording of frogs is laugh out loud funny, something all too rare in New Music. Only a couple of pieces come off as dry and academic. Almost all are intriguing and pleasurable. Hats way off to the very inventive Polansky.

Cold Blue

CB 0011

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Groom

CLAUDIO PONTIGGIA

Nine Compositions

"GENERATOR"

Sort of a best hits album in from this label in Switzerland. Nineteen cuts in a variety of styles, some

improvised, others leaning more towards more standard jazz. There are some WONDERFUL pieces on here.. a favorite (for me) was "Le Menagerie de Poche", which features some high-end & *high energy* flugelhorn by Matthieu Michel... it didn't last *long enough*, but it was a real treat. There are also several pieces that have excellent percussion on them (track 1, "Sticks & Mallets" is a good example). Each of the cuts is (apparently) from a separate album from the label... this would be an excellent way to find out if a particular album was worth buying. While I didn't find a lot here that would delight the "pure" improv fanatic, there is some RICH music on this CD - it gets a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for those who want diversity & a taste of the new in their musical adventures.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Claudio Pontiggio “Il Trio”

Claudio Pontiggio - Cor

Jean-Christophe Cholet - Piano

Heiri Kaenzig - Contrebasse

These three musicians have been performing as a trio at many important European jazz festivals. All arrangements were written by Cholet.

The three instruments co-existing as one melodic sound, then at times each instrument highlighted in solo form.

Of course, the horn takes command, but I enjoyed the crescendo of the bass and piano as they creep in. I am at times reminded of Vince Guaraldi as the pianist works his charm.

This release will appeal to the mainstream, as well as the discerning ear. Sometimes lively, always melodic - I think maybe best for a rainy day. A good CD. - Robin Taylor

CONTACT: Altrisuoni: Casella Postale 804, CH-6962 Viganello, Switzerland, Tel-Fax + 41 91 605 42 21. E-mail: info@altrisuoni.com, <http://www.altrisuoni.com>.

ESPOIR

CD

Claudio Pontiggia

C. Pontiggia: Horn

Jean-Critophe Cholet: Piano Andy Scherrer: Saxes Frank Tortiller:

Vibes Marcel Papaux: Drums

Paolino Dalla Porta: Bass

This CD is closer to traditional jazz (& not that pasty "smooth jazz", either) than many I've reviewed for "the Improvisor", but don't touch that dial YET! It is full of energy & has more emotion in (some of) its patterns than some of the "jazz masters" of old. Those who are improv "purists" will probably not agree (which is just fine), but I believe that a great part of the talent in jazz (whether improvised or composed) must be the ability to paint sonic images that are able to remind folks of moments (sober or salacious) in their lives they hadn't remembered. Pontiggia's horn does that in spades, without coming off as too "artsy". Scherrer's saxplay instantly takes me back to some of the earlier works by Getz, though with a bit more "body" coming through in his textures. In fact, all the instruments are so conscious and aware of each other that the listener is easily enchanted, whether in slow bass mode ("Chet"), or swingin' funk fantastique ("Porlezza"). This is some very well executed jazz that will hold your ears & make you wish there were more than 8 cuts to take you back down whatever memory lanes led you to this point in your life. Vibrant, full of life, & gets a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from this reviewer!.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Altri Suoni

Casella Postale 804, CH-6962

Viganello

Switzerland

altrisuoni@yahoo.com

<http://www.altrisuoni.com>

Raga for the Rainy Season

Pran (Powers and Dempster)

Greg Powers- trombones

Stuart Dempster- brass digeridu

Two Americans fusing European and Australian Aboriginal instruments in the tradition of Asian Indian Dhrupad music. Sonorous, droning, raga-sounding pieces that unfold gracefully, as if they had all the time in the world. If Hindustani music practitioners settle a planet, their descendants might sound like this in concert. For patient listeners only, it's a cd that makes "out there" no longer a tired cliché. Stunning: yielding and yet unyielding. - Richard Grooms

Sparkling Beatnik Records (SBR 0008)

Website < <http://faculty.washington.edu/dempster/> >

Maurice Magnoni - “SskieS”

Maurice Magnoni - Saxophone, flutes

Christy Doran - Electric guitar

Claude Jordan - Flute, electronics

Herve Provini - Drums

“Improvisation is the keyword to this music, though it may not always sound like it. Improvisation to me is a deliberate act, not a matter of aesthetics, not a matter of style either.” - Magnoni

Improvisational jazz moving from a mainstream sound, with some ambience, driving guitars, sometimes noise and heavy jazz flavors throughout. Good improvisational music at times but tends to be repetitive. Judge for yourself. - Robin Taylor

CONTACT: Altrisuoni: Casella Postale 804, CH-6962 Viganello, Switzerland, Tel-Fax + 41 91 605 42 21. E-mail: info@altrisuoni.com, <http://www.altrisuoni.com>.***

Crawlspace

Bhob Rainey- sop. Sax

Eric Rosenthal- perc.

Rainey extends that wailing, plaintive sound that many of the AACM /Chicago new thing jazz guys have excelled in for so long. He has an impressive range. Could he be playing unlisted reeds? Side two has Jack Wright on sax and wood flutes and Taylor Bynum on trumpet. The added musicians create a nice flow, well-chosen, pointed stabs at silence. A recommender.

Richard Grooms

Tautology (#008)
62 Boston Ave.
Medford, Mass. 02155

Breathing

Steve Nelson-Raney: saxophones, clarinet,
ocarina

shakuhachie,

Hal Rammel: musical saw, triolin, bass drum, amplified
sound palette

**1. arriving 2. scrutinizing 3. muttering 4. carving
5. ruffling 6. painting 7. arching 8. drawing
9. rolling 10. flexing 11. welding 12. breathing**

1. eeking out, squeezing a thin tone with the interspersal of highlighted honks and bowed metal 2. metal turns more conversational as saxophone becomes duck more animated 3. wheezy winds and smallness, shakuhachie breathes and metal bows 4. "thot thot" & saw, the simple language of musical recreation 5. the smallness of highs 6. the rolling of coaster winds 7. night becomes 8. a little special, 9. homemade 10. Santa's workshop, 11. musical meeting, 12. voices in the dawning of a rainbow platter.

-Marshun Cosmic

Penumbra Music
PO Box 282
Grafton, WI 53024
<http://www.execpc.com?~penumbra>
penumbra@execpc.com

A Arte Da Infelicidade

Hilton Raw

I'm not going to be able to provide much info on this record because all liner notes are in Portuguese. No matter-don't let that stop you from pursuing this cd. This is Brazilian pop music that's simultaneously traditional and anti-traditional. In other words, light but heavy, lilting but dissonant, pleasant but distancing, romantic but impersonal. A small part of it is boring techno music, but the large majority is often intriguing, surprising and refreshingly off-kilter. For darn sure it's a keeper. Brazilian pop just got way more diverse in my estimate. Probably yours, too.

D 3001

hiltonraw@drdd.com

Richard Grooms

SOUND

CD

Riot Trio

James Rohr - piano

Nate McBride - bass

Curt Newton - drum set

This CD is (without ANY doubt) the BEST piano-based improv (they call the pieces "collective compositions", which is a very apt description) I've heard in YEARS! Rohr's piano is a MONSTAH'... reach right out & grab hold of yer' head & won't LET GO... but it's totally qualified playing, clearly based on more than (just) "ear training". It's a '97 release from "Universal Spleen" records, & unfortunately didn't list any direct contact information (other than a phone number for James, 617-734-4908 (which I personally verified & also got an e-mail for James, which is jrohr@netzero.net) Even on the slower pieces (like "Milque Toast Molto Grosso"), there is a energy surge that will carry you to musical highs you never imagined! Lots of tension & release, expertly played by all in the trio. This will be considered a classic in the Zzaj camp, a DEFINITE keeper that merits our MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED rating, without qualification. Rotcod Zzaj

9Winds

POB 10082

Beverly Hills, CA 90213

USA

<http://members.aol.com/ninewinds>

SOUND IMPLOSION

CD

Robertson-Duval-Rosen

Herb Robertson - trumpets, voice, flugelhorn, soprano posthorn, various toys & whistles

Dominic Duval - bass, prepared bass

Jay Rosen - perc, whistles, voice

This CD starts off with a bass-centric comp that provides a relaxing transition to the first horn lead piece. Robertson's trumpet playing is **SOLID**, without (in any way) being overbearing. The percussion that Rosen plays is somehow "sneaky"... very unobtrusive - you don't even realize it's there until 3 minutes (or so) have gone by. This cut, "Deep Purple", is a beautiful bluesy thang that made me (immediately) think of my younger years, roamin' th' downtown Strasse in Frankfurt, lookin' for trouble. The range of musical moods they carry you through is **MOST** impressive, enhanced by the fact that their communication levels (between themselves as they play) are at **ASTOUNDING** levels. All the way from that blues-based thang I mentioned earlier, to "deep" improv, to the lead-out on track 9, "Mom, Food, Then Rio" (nice Latino trek)! It will only take one thorough listening to realize that their plan is to **WRAP** you in their sound & not let go until you've **REACHED** nirvana. A thoroughly enjoyable experience from a very talented trio. Gets a **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** from us!

-Rotcod Zzaj

Creative Improvised Music Projects
The Cadence Building
Redwood, NY 13679
USA

o despertar do funambulo

CD

Americo Rodrigues

My wife is asking me who died as this plays. Billed as "Sound Poetry", it doesn't quite fill the bill. Some of that automatic speaking over top of quite interesting improvised instruments (brass & reeds for the most part). There's no doubt that this can be interesting in a live setting, where the audience often gets to participate, but the spoken stufh is so far into random that it can't pull the listener "in" on a recording. I find spoken-word stuff from madpoet John M. Bennett far more interesting, because there are interjections of words/phrases that allow the listener a reference point... Rodrigues spoken work, while totally "free", gives the you little but energy (tho' there's **PLENTY** of that). In fact, it's almost to the point where the words actually **DISTRACT** from what might be a very interesting set of improvised instrumentals. For those into total strange & "grab as ya' go" poetry, there may be some attraction, but it just wasn't my cuppa' mud. You be the judge, I guess.

-Rotcod Zzaj

AND ONLY LIFE MY LUSH LAMENT

Taylor ho Bynum, trumpet, flugelhorn, pocket trumpet

Eric Rosenthal, percussion, slide whistle

Not since Kondo & Lovens duet "*The Last Supper*" has anyone tried a brass and drums duet that I know of unless you count Ross Rabin and Tom Djll's duo in the early to mid eighties but they had a huge range with extensive use of electronics and other implements. The reason is the sheer nakedness of the trumpet. Nowhere to hide. Your tone is exposed to the whole world. Sax players can use split-tones, multiphonics and the velocity of ten fingers racing up and down the horn plus circular breathing. The trumpet's forte is the terse comment, the slurred note, the humorous aside, the insightful line. And though it doesn't egg on the drummer the way a saxophone can, if you find the right drummer like Eric Rosenthal who is equally witty and sparse with his own phrasing, the results are rather like a fine cooling mist spray on a blazing summer day. Refreshing. What these two have done is take nine standards such as *My Favorite Things*, *Mood Indigo*, *Lush Life* and *Niama* and perform a wry take on each one. I found the best way to listen is causally, in a relaxed mode as familiar melodies drift past in snippets. You could listen closely and carefully and this recording stands up quite well but how many improvised recordings are a real pleasure without that kind of effort. This has a surreal quality to it. Its not about difficult listening or mega-chops. Bynum certainly has range on his horn but he favors the middle register where the tone is fat and earthy. Rosenthal doesn't try to keep the tunes together but adds a depth of nuance and humor to the proceedings. All and all a very relaxed and together outing that is both unique and comfortable which is all too rare in improvised music.

Joe Conroy

This CD is available from:

Sachimay Records
www.SachimayRecords.com
or Eric Rosenthal (617)522-2900

Crawlspace

Bhob Rainey- sop. Sax

Eric Rosenthal- perc.

Rainey extends that wailing, plaintive sound that many of the AACM /Chicago new thing jazz guys have excelled in for so long. He has an impressive range. Could he be playing unlisted reeds? Side two has Jack Wright on sax and wood flutes and Taylor Bynum on trumpet. The added musicians create a nice flow, well-chosen, pointed stabs at silence. A recommender.

Richard Grooms

Tautology (#008)
62 Boston Ave.
Medford, Mass. 0215

Lune Rousse

Rosetta

Matthieu Michel (bugle),
Yves Massy (trombone),
Daniel Perrin (accordion, piano),
Pierre-Francois Massy (contrabass),
Marcel Papaux (drums).

Accordion, trombone and bass usher us into a landscape of smooth composition. Sounds like music to accompany the credits at the beginning of one of those late night movies I used to fall asleep not watching. (Comme au Theatre). Then a circus erupts (Contine), and the effect is quite jarring, the opposite of the previous tune. A wacky, repetitive head that brings to mind Rocky and Bullwinkle (!). After the head we get quick soloing from...that's a bugle? Or is bugle the French word for trumpet? Then trombone, as little motifs from the head re-enter...and trade twos with the

drummer. The whole thing fades, lulling you into a false sense of finale,
then the head SHOUTS again and ends on a clipped cymbal crash.

"Nick Shadow" is very somber, and "La Complainte Du Triceratops" a greasy
sound poem with stumbling drums, and...Hey isn't that the tune from the last
piece? These are very definitely compositions, with improvising playing a
lesser role. The band has a great smooth sound and the players are all
talented and practiced. But... In between the first and second paragraph of
this review, I went to the corner store, and my car stereo was playing music
exactly like this, courtesy of our local Jazz station. In fact, the two
musics were so alike that for a few minutes I thought I was listening to the
CD still. I suppose these guys should be getting airplay any day now.

-jeph jerman

Unit Records
Wasserwerkstrasse 94
CH - 8037 Zurich
Switzerland
Tel: 41-1-361-87 15
Fax: 41-1-201 81 55

Pierre-Francois MassBeau-Sejour 24
CH - 8040 Lausanne
Switzerland
Tel: 41-21-323 81 96

Lalo Rossi - "Clepxidra"

Keyboard, all compositions & Clepxidralogo by Rossi Lauro Lalo

A collage of different moods, timing, sound, etc. There are four flute solos and five piano solos which utilize about half of this release. The remaining songs are upbeat, sometimes off-beat and explore the realm of the instrument(s) played. It seemed to me that two different CD's were combined into one. The upbeat mood is split by light flute solos and piano solos (which works the keys). Even at times you get a psychedelic feel (song 2 especially). - Robin Taylor

CONTACT: Altrisuoni: Casella Postale 804, CH-6962 Viganello, Switzerland, Tel-Fax + 41 91 605 42 21. E-mail: info@altrisuoni.com, <http://www.altrisuoni.com>.

DIVERTISSEMENT CD

Misterioso

Massimo Rossi, alto & saxophones, Rosella Cangini, voice Carlo Actis Dolo, baritone sax & bass clarinet Federico Marchesano, double bass & el. bass

A CD in from "centro musica creativo". Well, creative it most certainly IS! I particularly enjoyed the wierd combinations of voice & reeds performed by Rosella. This music is high-energy horn based pandemonium - but not the "screech & whistle" kind. Well formed sounds, complete interactions that form an enchanting mix that's hard to resist. Those with (any) difficulty understanding how light and shadow affect aural images may also find this more of a challenge than they can deal with, but those who thirst for talent unbounded will certainly thrive. These folks are clearly in love with freedom in music, improvising from the first bar to the last. I can (now) see why my friend Amy Denio loves Italia so much... on second thought, she PROBABLY had much to DO with this level of creativity occurring. In a sense, comparisons with her more poignant vocal works are certainly in order. In the overall, a fantastic musical experience that gives the listener an equal mix of each player's broad skill range. Gets a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from me.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Massimo Rossi
c.so Mazzini 32-10080
Rivara, Italy

Last Cicada Singing

Christopher Roberts- qin

Roberts here plays the qin, the venerable Chinese zither-like instrument. It's of course not like traditional qin music because Roberts suggest such disparate elements such as Delta Blues and

Ralph Towner, achieving an end product that's neither East nor West but a synthesis that does honor to both frames of mind. Like classical Chinese solo instrumental playing (or Ralph Towner, for that matter) Roberts makes silence work for him. Nothing is forced; all sounds as if it has existed for a very long time as part of a previously unimagined tradition. The tension between experimentation and conservatism is irrelevant here. All of this makes this album very much one to recommend.

Cold Blue

CB 0034

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

M' Lumba vs. Kobalt 6

[Spinning Tourists in a City of Ghosts](#)

Rob Von Roy, Ron Banji, Kurt Leege

M' Lumbo reminds me of White Noise, a doozy electronic band of the mid-Seventies that combined a vague pop sensibility with the lazy, ambient sound of far-off radio stations fading in and out of your tuner. They anticipated a lot of rave stuff by 15 years, not to mention 80's electro pop. The best stuff here, such as "The Soul Exchange," is that kind of thing at its best. Some of it does, however, succumb to the boredom that can creep into those shifting stations. At times it sounds like a logical outgrowth of the Beatles' "Revolution 9," although here there's not as much affinity with conventional musical sense. If folks are tired of the easy listening music that characterizes so much of rave and techno, this is where they may want to go. Happy landings to them.

-Richard Grooms

Unit Circle Records

www.unitcircle.com

Guzheng Music

David Sait

Sait- guzheng (18-string Chinese zither),
elec. gtr., acoustic gtr., keyboard, strumstick

Too many records that attempt to combine musics from different countries end up cheapening, if not outright trashing, most if not all of the sources they try to fuse. Though of course there's no such thing as a "pure" culture and I have to say that musical fusing can be one of the best things going, I've heard too many train wrecks or, on the other hand, aggressively shallow noodlings. *Guzheng Music* is more than just the exception to these tendencies. "Heat is Healing" stakes out a new territory neither east nor west and most tracks come off very well indeed. Sait glides this ancient instrument effortlessly into modern territory, or he can get subcontinent Indian, Appalachian or Celtic out of his zither in beguiling ways. There's nothing forced here and it all comes together in a manner that usually sounds like it was always meant to be just that way. Trust me, that's very hard to do.

www.davidsait.com

Richard Grooms

Real goods here, folks. "Coastal Traces Tidepools" for grand piano insides and waterphone, in its crystalline strangeness, makes me think of what fractals might sound like if they were physical and danced. "Glacier Track" raises sand deserts, not ice deserts. Van Cleve's oboe d'amore sounds an elegy for a lost tribal elder with its echoes of Middle Eastern sonorities. It's a stunner. Van Cleve uses the screaming potentials of the shenai to scary effect on "Shenai Sky" and "Beginnings." Throughout the record the categories "composed" and "improvised" are thoroughly blurred. The musicians offer droning,

keening, frayed but rich music throughout and the result is the stuff of depth, substrata and eternity, even. It's an involving, deep-listening excursion into the night side of reality.

OO Discs 0029

Richard Grooms

Nocturnalis

Sandbox Trio

Christian Heilman, Chuch Ehlis, Daniel Panasenکو
Custer

with Beth

From what sounds like an ominous opening of electronically processed thunderstorm grows a warped groove, developing elements, adding quasi electro-door slam, metal man, marimba qualities, grows a little boring too quick.

The second cut was better with the haunting beauty of the clarinet. The CD progressed with a further reference to the rock "dance beat," the prominent slam on beats 2 and 4 were completely irritating me juxtaposed against much free-er and more interesting rhythmic pallettes as the bass clarinet ventured in the low zone offset by a repetitive, but catchy phrase played on prepared guitar.

Rhythmic and groovy, Nocturnalis did posses a kind of late night rapport, evoking "brain dead" in a most provocative way. I found this music to be moody and luscious. It carried me almost into a dream state. Rhythmic repetition soaring with chordalities and harmonic wavelike textures. Most hypnotic. An even blending of electronically generated wash and percussion with accoustic instrumental voices producing a lovely landscape ripe for the imaginary.

-Chaz Carpenter

Daniel Panasenکو
64 Brookdale Ave
SanRafael, CA 94901
www.sandboxtrio.com
sandboxtrio@hotmail.com

April Works

Peter Schärli

Stella Rambisai Chiweshe mbira, vocal
Dom Um Romao percussion vocal
Burhan Oçal percussion
Leonard Ngwenya percussion
Fredy Studer drums
Hämi Hämmerli bass
David Gattiker cello
Glenn Ferris trombone
Roland Philipp sax, flute
Peter Schärli trumpet, Flugelhorn

This CD is a rare blending of African and European free jazz. Whereas many "world music" based collaborations are just that, based on a particular ethnic sound, this CD by contrast is completely authentic. The mbira and darbuka lure the listener into the mood of the CD with kalimba like rhythmic form, a sharp and yet warm trumpet pierces the texturhythm, but yet belongs. There is a continuation as African beats, voices, and native instruments are melded with the free jazz excursions of the Europeans. At one point, what was an engaging melodic excursion transfers and becomes a startling eurojazz meltdown. The clarity of the trumpeter in relationship to the interactivity of the various instrumentations, some Swiss jazz, some African creates continuity throughout. The interaction of the instrumental voices create conversation and segue the introduction of a talking voice.. (s)

This is truly free music. It is truly multi-cultural, the best blending of the worlds that I've heard. Arresting African percussion mixes with uncompromised euro-"big"-band free-jazz, There is *nothing like this* in American free improv. There is a signature European quality. It's about life, moments, places, consciousness, exchange. This is GREAT music!

-LaDonna Smith

Peter Schärli
Aegerten 11
CH-5742 Kolliken
Switzerland

UNIT Records
PO Box 1474
CH-8610
Vox/Fax 01 942 22 63

The Animation Of Lists And The Archytan Transpositions

Warren Burt

Burt- composer

Catherine Schieve- tuning forks

Don't let the title mystify or intimidate you-I don't get it either. Just be aware that this is a theatre wherein Burt's rough compositional outlines leave room for improvisation and randomness-and it's all played on tuning forks. Schieve's nimbleness on the forks (there are many types of them in her array) makes for a forest of surprising, wholly novel and almost always gentle sounds. The sounds seem to rise up vertically from the surface, and then fade away, to be replaced by new ones. Masterfully recorded for optimum clarity, detail and warmth, this is a document of remarkable sonic gorgeousness. Though the "pieces" are divided up into four parts in the liner notes there is no pause or significant change when one piece stops and another starts. In effect each cd in this 2-cd set is a "piece." Fans of Tibetan bells and overtones will be at least intrigued and probably delighted by this record as will anyone open to new horizons in the possibility of consonant sound.

Experimental Intermedia

XI 130

www.xirecords.org

Richard Grooms

VAZEN VOL (vases full)

CD

The Schismatics

Jodi Gilbert, vocals **Beatrice van der Poel**, vocals **Han Buhrs**, vocals, perc **Maartje ten Hoorn**, violin **Frank van Berkel**, bass

The group title pretty much says it all... if you're not schizoid when you first start listening to this - you WILL be by time it's ended! 11 cuts of strong vocal work integrated with orchestral string sounds... tho' they're (mostly) in another language (Dutch, I believe, perhaps a lil' German mixed in), you'll clearly understand the intent. This kind of improvised vox & spontaneous pandemonium won't be everyone's cup of tea - it requires a little insanity. On the other hand, this is FUN music... I enjoyed the heck out of it. Doubt this will ever make "prime time", even on stations that feature improvised music, but it certainly rates a RECOMMENDED from us (especially if you enjoy music that features vocal madness) Contact at Vaalser Str. 94, 52074, Aachen, Germany, **Rotcod Zzaj**

9Winds
POB 10082
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
USA
<http://members.aol.com/ninewinds>

Fidel

Koch-Schutz-Studer & Musicos Cubanos

Hans Koch (bass clarinet, electronics, samples, tapes, sequencer, soprano sax, tenor sax,),
Martin Schutz (electric 5 string cello, acoustic cello, samples, electronics),
Freddy Studer (drums, percussion, metal),
with the members of **Musicos Cubanos** on latin percussion and voices.

On first hearing I could not shake the memories this disc conjured up. Bill Laswell-like bass (cello?) lines, dense latin percussion backed by driving drum kit...sudden bursts of a-rhythm and a-tonality that get interrupted by more percussing. I kept hearing Material...Golden Palaminos and 23 Skidoo, all bands I have loved at one time or another.

Some of the material here was dreamed up by the europeans, and some is apparently more traditionally Cuban, over which the improvisors improvise, somehow managing to never sound out of place. A cultural exchange?

I think this set points out the fallacy of musical boundaries, that sounds made by humans can usually find common ground, no matter how seemingly disparate their origins. Perhaps this is a political recording, something which I usually have little ear for. But when the results are this pleasing, this interesting...this much of a groove, I cease to care. I would hope that these three continue their musical explorations. How about a record with some Koreans? Or Morroccans?

A word about Intakt Records is in order as well. All of their packages I have seen are well made with beautiful color photos of the performers and plenty of liner text for those inclined to read it. I listen forward for more.

jeph jerman

Intakt Records
P.O.Box 468
CH-8024 Zurich
Switzerland
www.intaktrec.ch
intakt@intaktrec.ch

The View Is Better From the Top of the Food Chain

Yellow Star Mailing List

The Cram and Stuff Method Jugalbandi

Greg Segal (guitar and gadgets), Hyam R. Sosnow (drums)

Three CDs worth of rock type music from this duo. Most pieces have a stated theme (or at least chord sequence), followed by often lengthy extrapolations, all hung on a beat. The playing is imaginative and they are obviously listening closely to each other, as the interaction is constant. I think though, that this kind of music is better described as Jamming, as most of these pieces is structured like a song, and they are even referred to as such in the voluminous liner notes. There isn't much use of extended technique, by either of these fellows, and very little tendency to step outside of their respective instruments traditional roles. Guitar for chord structure/melody, drums for rhythm. That said, within the confines of this area, they offer many moods and conjure memories of many bands past. And they definitely have chops, so personally I kind of enjoyed listening to some of the super-fast drum fills and guitar-hero lead playing. I sometimes wished for a third instrument while listening to this set, a bass player maybe, but the more players added to a situation like this, the harder it is to maintain that "instant song" idea.

Though released as a set, each CD comes packaged individually, with the above mentioned, by-the-song notes, and the Jugalbandi Improvisation Level Classification System, whereby you can see how much improvisation was involved in each song.

Great Artiste 89 Records
P.O. Box 55843
Sherman Oaks CA 91413-0843
www.jugalbandi-music.com

The View Is Better From the Top of the Food Chain

Yellow Star Mailing List

The Cram and Stuff Method

Jugalbandi

Greg Segal (guitar and gadgets), Hyam R. Sosnow (drums)

Three CDs worth of rock type music from this duo. Most pieces have a stated theme (or at least chord sequence), followed by often lengthy extrapolations, all hung on a beat. The playing is imaginative and they are obviously listening closely to each other, as the interaction is constant. I think though, that this kind of music is better described as Jamming, as most of these pieces are structured like a song, and they are even referred to as such in the voluminous liner notes. There isn't much use of extended technique, by either of these fellows, and very little tendency to step outside of their respective instruments' traditional roles. Guitar for chord structure/melody, drums for rhythm. That said, within the confines of this area, they offer many moods and conjure memories of many bands past. And they definitely have chops, so personally I kind of enjoyed listening to some of the super-fast drum fills and guitar-hero lead playing. I sometimes wished for a third instrument while listening to this set, a bass player maybe, but the more players added to a situation like this, the harder it is to maintain that "instant song" idea.

Though released as a set, each CD comes packaged individually, with the above mentioned, by-the-song notes, and the Jugalbandi Improvisation Level Classification System, whereby you can see how much improvisation was involved in each song. ~Jeff Jerman

**Great Artiste 89 Records
P.O. Box 55843
Sherman Oaks CA 91413-0843
www.jugalbandi-music.com**

Hums 2 Terre

Franck Vigreux- gtr., turntable, keyboards, minidisk

Elliot Sharp- gtrs., reeds, piano, electronics, computer processing

What we have here is frenetic and jittery, highly urban improv-ing set in loose structures. What you invite over to your stereo is Warner Brothers cartoon characters, downtown hipsters and musos allergic to anything staid. Fiery all the way through and so full of points, edges and curves that your ears may need a chiropractor after a listening. So invigorating you could skip the treadmill for today. Hot diggety-dog!

Signature

SIG 11040 HMCD 83

Richard Grooms

Shorehoses

John Sheffield

Although not "improvised music" so to speak, this music struck me deeply in the cord, the spinal cord that is: the pulsation, the rhythm of the body, the heartbeat, the flow.

Studio produced ambient groove music, subliminal and mesmerizing. From Floating World Studios, Columbus, Missouri, float into another world of digital delay mantras, ambient electronica, illbient, intelligent dance music. As the artists put it, "Relish minimalistically saturated unbegun burdens."

I did. I relish.

-Chaz Carpente

Sparkling Beatnik Records (SBR0005)

108 West Forest Ave.

Columbia, MO 65203

800-836-2291

www.sparklingbeatnik.com

Karl Seigfried

Criminal Mastermind

Seigfried- acoustic bass

Seigfried here does one of the ultimate high-wire acts: an entire album of solo acoustic bass. Very few players even try this. There's a reason why, for instance, classical composers never really wrote for solo bass unlike, say, solo cello. And very few jazz bassists have ever done this either. It's inherently hard making the bass not a background instrument for extended lengths of time. The free improv possibilities enlarge the possibilities and the palette more, though. And Seigfried come off pretty well. "Beneath the Underdog" is a nicely propulsive tip of the hat to the master Mingus, and "Mass Builder" essays existential bleakness without boring you, which isn't easy to do. "Ambient" makes for a brainy sort of funk, and the pluckfest "Hypnotic Minds" is also a success. This record will appeal to very adventurous jazz and most free improv fans both, but there's somewhat more appeal for the free music crowd. It makes you wonder if the old guys were missing something by not writing solo works for this instrument.

Imaginary Records 002

imaginaryrecords@yahoo.com

Richard Grooms

STOTS:

Lucas Simonis

electro accoustic composition using field recordings:

"point of departure for making the whole songcycle a conscious misunderstanding of language; coming from the idea that you can never say exactly the same thing in a different language..stots and all the song

titles are in a secret language as an expression for the receiver to only use their senses for perception; not a banal knowledge of dogmatic or misunderstood information"...

Lukas Simonis; guitarist, composer, lives in Rotterdam (Netherlands) and co-founded and works for WORM (a center for experimental arts). Most of his musician-life he played in bands and projects that were avant-garde, experimental but still moved within the field of 'rock'..(Dull Schicksal, Trespassers W, Morzelpronk, AA Kismet, Vril & Coolhaven).

His interest lays in abstract 'sound' direction using electronics, improvisation, voice, field recordings and objects. From what I'm hearing, this music moves from slices of forward and backward choking and gagging to a giving over to exploring the brittle beauty of saturation

in electro static, dripping, soaring ambient washes of sonic hints of everyday activities, measurements on the scale of universal human activities vs. filtering habits, responding in a quietude within the noise.

LS

Label: Z6 (NL)

distributors: Korm Plastics/Staalpallt/Rer Megacorp/Studio

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~lukas>

OISI VOCI

CD

Six and More

Too many players to itemize

The music on this CD will infatuate some (I'm among them) & infuriate others (those who don't recognize electronics as a valid format for improvisation yet). In from Deutschland, there is a strange assemblage of sonic oddities indeed. 18 tracks, various moods (as you might imagine with that amount of toonz) and aural adventure for everyone! Track 8, "Special Fire Mix", was especially attractive to my earz'... uses heavy metal sounding things to achieve an almost orchestral outing. If you're looking for horns, piano or any instruments in the "normal" sense, you'll have to seek elsewhere - but this is NOT just another "noise attack", either. Clear sense of focus with the same intensity I've heard on hard be-bop improv, or fretboard antics by the masters, yet composed enough that it doesn't come off sounding like amateurs gone insane on a case o' Casios. I'm more than impressed, & for those who aren't afraid to bite off a bit more in the way of wierd than they may be able to chew, this comes **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Rotcod Zzaj**

ARCHEGON,
Gunter Schroth

Muhlgasse 31, 60486
Frankfurt/Main, Germany
archegon@t-online.de

Nakadai

Chas Smith

Smith-pedal steel guitar, percussion

Bob Fernandez, John Fitzgerald, M.B. Gordy, Theresa Knight-percussion

I used to think Smith's music evoked the flat, wide-open spaces of the American West. Now I think a more accurate description is the limitless interiors of the mind. Not that the two are mutually exclusive; in fact, they compliment one another. But the West, finally, doesn't have the space to contain all that this music suggests. The title work evidences this. The pedal steel on "Hollister" shapes a gigantic streamlined metallic spaceship-you can listen to it ascend and descend by turns. If this suggests anything at all pulp, the result is anything but. "Seduction" for pedal steel and percussion comes across as celestial cymbalons. "Betrayal" is an abstract gong-filled temple of the imagination. This is the most various and impressive Chas Smith record I've ever heard. His palette is broader and the resonances are deeper.

Cold Blue

CB 0029

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Gary Smith/John Stevens

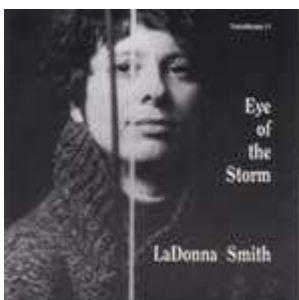
Gary Smith: elec. guitar

John Stevens: perc., mini-trumpet

Seven nimble cuts from two Brits new to me. (Of course they're new to me- why else you think I write these things?) Smith is a subtle worker of guitar soundings, a John Abercrombie descendant (that guy really has cast a long shadow) who'd make the master proud. But he doesn't come as close to traditional harmonies, or tunes for that matter, as Abercrombie does. He carries this off well. Stevens has a similarly elliptical and gnomic approach. This is, then, minimalist post-jazz. Minimal in the sense that it eschews big statements. Or even easily recognizable statements. If you like Abercrombie's duets work, and have speculated about him going into more outside and abstract territory, this is your ticket there. It's bracing, high-density music.

Richard Grooms

Ecstatic Peace
Dist. by Forced Exposure
PO Box 9102
Waltham, Mass. 02254



EYE OF THE STORM (cd) LaDonna Smith

Solo violin, viola & voice improvisations. Recorded live from solo concerts in Europe and USA, 1992 *"LaDonna truly transforms the violin into a spectrum of colors beyond the context of the instrument and purifies your mind with the raw energy of multiple violinistic soundings."*

Click to Listen: [Atmospheric Debris](#) **TQ0011 \$15**



TRANSMUTATING (cd)

Davey Williams and **LaDonna Smith**, live improvisations

Weaving their musical drama in the psychic automatism that is the true nature of their music, this CD will take you to other realms of the imagination, 1993. **TQ0012 \$15**

Splinter Orchestra

The Splinter Orchestra is a 27-member improv group from Australia. Their members play most of the standard jazz array of instruments plus guzheng, laptop, synthesizers and so on, letting you know you're not anywhere close to jazz territory. The Splinters have much more to do with post-mid-century modern classic music than jazz, but that's just a signpost rather than a description. "First Tutti" is vaguely reminiscent of Elliot Carter's large-scale flux, but it's warm whereas Carter is bracingly cold. It's more continuous and harmonic than Carter, too. It could be an aural portrait of cosmic stew right before the Big Bang exploded it. Very stunning. "First Play" is a Morning of the World excursion rich in tentativeness. "Second Play" is another flux piece, this time more calming. "Third Play" is a breathing, whirling, hissing marvel that never settles down. "Second Tutti" lets loose the eldritch spirits of the Splinters. This record is a consistently rich, provocative and challenging experience. It is organically very impressive. Highest marks.

www.splitrec.com

Richard Grooms

CD

HV West

Charles Peris, sax & flutes **Bruno Steffen**, piano

Herbert Kramis, bass **Mark Huber**, drums

This is THE best jazz/improv quartet I've heard in 2000! It's not just that their groove is tight (which it CERTAINLY is)... it's because they are able to paint brand new horizons in each & every composition (while staying clearly in the realm of "music"). Charles Peris flute playing (probably) has a lot to do with that, but all 4 musicians show themselves to be fully accomplished & sensitive to their surroundings. Don't let that keyword (sensitive) give you the impression that they can't "improv", though.. Track 4, "Big Bang", tho' very short (1:10), & the title track, "Zunder", show just how stellar & free they can be! Exceptional recording, high talent & an abundance of energy blend to provide an album that reflects all the good things improvised jazz should be. Bound to become a classic, this rates a MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, without qualification.

-Rotcod Zzaj

Unit Records
POB 53
CH-179 Lugnorre
Switzerland

Al-Noor

Carl Stone

Stone-electronics, tapes

Carl Stone has long been a prominent American electronics composer but I've never gotten around to listening to him until this. The pieces here are the result of disassembling and very cleverly reassembling world music vocal tracks, with highly sensual and intriguing results. The title piece comes across simultaneously as Javanese, Arabic and Japanese-it never lets you pin it down, and it's astounding. Stone has somehow found the common denominators that underlie the various types of traditional ethnic vocal musics. "Flints" appears to be based on all-too-familiar contemporary house music beats, but they're transformed from something that's best to dance to into something that's best to listen to, partly because you couldn't dance to it if you tried. Not knowing what the original tracks (or

countries of origin) were adds to the mystery and the shiver of discovery. In "Jitlada" electronic dance music has again been transmuted into techniques long since developed by experimental musicians. Maybe someday they'll incorporate some of these tricks into dance music, but they'd have to be selective as only a rapid insect could dance to this album as it is. The final track combines the Byrds, the Baroque and a couple of limited riffs and very gradually builds into a manically minimal finish. Overall, the record is a true expansion of musical possibilities.

In Tune

CD 10

www.intunemusic.com

Richard Grooms

SHARPMUSIC

CD

Altri Suoni

Sort of a "best hits" album in from this label in Switzerland. Nineteen cuts in a variety of styles, some improvised, others leaning more towards more standard jazz. There are some WONDERFUL pieces on here.. a favorite (for me) was "Le Menagerie de Poche", which features some high-end (& high energy) flugelhorn by Matthieu Michel... it didn't last "long enough", but it was a real treat. There are also several pieces that have excellent percussion on them (track 1, "Sticks & Mallets" is a good example). Each of the cuts is (apparently) from a separate album from the label... this would be an excellent way to find out if a particular album was worth buying. While I didn't find a lot here that would delight the "pure" improv fanatic, there is some RICH music on this CD - it gets a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for those who want diversity & a taste of "the new" in their musical adventures. **Rotcod Zzaj**

Altri Suoni
POB 804, CH-6962
Viganello
Switzerland

Zigzag

Kazamaki Takashi

Takashi- percussion

Pulling off a solo percussion album is hard enough. To release one, promote it and get people to listen to it seems almost impossible, even in this age of do-it-yourself. I'd never heard of Takashi, but I've heard of Tom Cora, Ned Rothenberg, Nick Didkovsky and Elliot Sharp, all of whom he's played with. And Samm Bennett, who's in that group, is someone I personally know. So I was intrigued, of course. Takashi comes through impressively here in this collection of freely improvised live cuts. He not only survives the high-wire act that is the solo percussion record, he prevails. Strongly recommended for percussion followers of any kind.

Kid Ailack

KID- 0002

www.pekori.jp/~michiru/kazamaki/kazamaki_top.html

Richard Grooms

Trignition

Barre Phillips (contrabass),

Bertram Turetzky (contrabass),

Vinny Golia (Eb, Bb, bass & contra-bass clarinets, soprano & baritone saxophones, suonas)

Very solid landscapes conjured up by these three. Follow the leader, or we're all the leader, or...some space for short solos and much attentive listening. Some attempts at inventing lines or themes are circumvented, to good results. Storytime in the nursery or a dark tale around the campfire, it's the same story to the trio. The parts I like the most don't go on long enough and leave me waiting through the sing-songy stuff to get to more ear-pulling. That's just me though, and when I remind myself that I should maybe just listen, I enjoy it all. The singers, the song and the sounds that they are sounding.

jeph jerman

9Winds
PO Box 10082
Beverly Hills CA 90213
members@aol.com/ninewinds/

Tertiary Trio

Title Goes Here

Rent Control Records,
rcrc009

[Andy Haas- sax](#)

[Don Fiorino- gtr.](#)

[Paul Corio- drums](#)

Solid improv playing from Brooklyn, NYC. There's no pro forma material here, no slouching. But nothing truly extraordinary, either. I don't hear much that couldn't

have come out of loft jazz recording sessions in New York in the 70's. Some of the musicians here appear on the Hanuman Sextet cd Confusing the Devil which came off

better focused and more original. Still, there's enough here to make me want to listen to this trio next time out.

Rent Control Records
263 First Ave. #3
NY, NY 10003

[<rentcontrolrecords.com>](http://rentcontrolrecords.com)

Richard Grooms

9 Meals From Anarchy

Hanuman Sextet

Andy Haas- sax, raita, morsing, live electronics

Don Florino- lotar, lap steel gtr.

Mia Theodoratus- electric harp

Matt Heyner- bass, erhu

David Gould- drums, perc.

Deepop- drums, perc.

More unexpected and entirely fresh music from the Hanumans. One of the elements that most makes this so welcome, so left-field, is Theodoratus' electric harp. She adds piquant and enlivening darts to each track, helping to make them gravity-defying and disarmingly festive. In fact, there's a joyful, buoyant spirit throughout, partly because the group takes such a casual and unrespectful attitude toward jazz and free improvisation. To them total freedom really is a means to do something that upsets expectations and boundaries. Heyner's mournful erhu and Florino's corkscrewy lap steel bring outside-the-box intelligence and heart to the proceedings. The Hanumans continue to banish constrictions, which is as high a compliment as I can pay them. There's as much originality and sheer surprise here as you'd find in an average 20-30 free albums.

www.myspace.com/RADIOCHINGNEWYORK

contact: radioi-ching@earthlink.nt

Resonant Music 007

Richard Grooms

The Zero Hour - "Departure Of One"

All guitar, bass, vox, percussion, drum programming by Robert J.

"Darkness within darkness. The Gateway to All Understanding." ...TAO

SEX - got your attention? If so, you will probably like this CD. The feel is dark, moody and at times slinky. Just picture a hybrid of Julee Cruse, Chris Isaak and Nick Cave. Winding through

driving guitars, crooning, acoustics, echoing and the list goes on. I like #9 the best - “you make me feel, like I feel, when I’m with you.” All in all this is a good CD. I personally think David Lynch should check this guy out for his next movie soundtrack. - Robin Taylor

Rude Dog Records

P.O. Box 27221

Tempe, AZ 85282-7221 USA

Do The Glimpse

Luv Rokambo

Toru Toneyama- elec. gtr., keybs., toys, vocal

Osam Kato- elec. and acous. Gtrs., keybs., vocal

“Lament” gives the listener a powerfully ritualistic experience with a repeating, cyclical guitar figure and wordless vocals. Not all the rest of this record is as strong or concise as this, but about half of it is worth listening to. The whole platter is worth owning just for “Lament”, though.

www.sinkhole.net/pehome

Richard Grooms

Tomatic 7 - “Hauptstrom”

Sam Leigh Brown - voc

Stephan Meinberg - tp, flgh

Gabriel Perez - sax, cl

Manfred Portugall - e-git

Jurgen Friedrich - p

Sebastian Rather - bass

Christian Thome - dr, arr

The debut of Cologne drummer Christian Thome. This release lends a variety of styles from classic jazz instrumentals, a little world music sound and the crooning of an English female singer by the name of Sam Leigh Brown.

Thome's musical short story allows solo work of the band without letting it "become virtuoso personality performances." These qualified jazz musicians are aware of the possibilities between the jazz standards and free improvisation.

This release will appeal to the mainstream and contains a good mix.. When the CD was over, I wanted more of Brown's crooning. Good CD. - Robin Taylor

JazzHausMusik, Venloerstr, 40, 50672 Koln; Tel +49 221 952994 50; Fax +49 221 952994 90; e-mail - jhm@jazzhausmusik.de; <http://jazzhausmusik.de>

Bug

**Nicolas Desmarchelier (guitar),
Olivier Toulemonde (treatments).**

Improvised duets between a guitarist and a sound processor. There would seem to be a lot of this sort of thing going on these days, Evan Parker's Electro-Acoustic Ensemble being a good example. There's also a bit of contention as to whether it's valid or not. Well, validity is largely a cornerstone for purists, and most buildings do crumble eventually...

So listen. The ghosts of a million string stranglers come wafting up through clouds of static. At times this does sound like two people and at others it's a glob of sound. Obviously, one of the reasons for improvising in this way is the uncertainty factor. The guitarist may not know exactly which of his sounds is going to be heard, or in what form they will come out. I would say that makes for exciting playing. It makes me wonder whether Desmarchelier is playing continuously and reacting to the manglings of his sound, or whether he is contemplating his next move quietly.

I would also venture that this process is akin to the literary method of Cut-ups, whose aim was the breaking up of lines of association w/in thought patterns. In both cases the end result is a beautifully wrecked language. Wish it was a bit longer.

jeph jerman

Bd Joliot Curie
F-01000 Bourg en Bresse
France
+33 (0) 4 74 24 38 64
ishtarco@infonie.fr

THE MOUSE THAT ROARED

Matt Turner; cello

This concert was recorded at the New Directions Cello Festival in 1997 at Storrs, CT. and represents Matt Turner as one of the great American cellists alongside the likes of Craig Hultgren, Doug Carroll and the late Tom Cora. He executes seven improvisations with a mastery over his instrument on every level: Deep gorgeous tone, impeccable intonation, beautiful melodic phrasing and an impressive vocabulary of extended technique. The first improvisation is breathtaking with aching, then soaring cello lines that illustrate why so many people claim the cello as one of their favorite instruments. Matt is one of those improvisers who carefully delineates an area of exploration and then launches a detailed exploration of just that direction. He never rushes nor succumbs to the unnecessary or extraneous diversion. He stays true on his course getting the most out of his instrument for that task. I have heard him before, usually with a trio he has with bassist Jeff Song and drummer John Mettam but the range he displayed on this solo outing took me by surprise, especially the depth and maturity of his playing. As it stands, this rates as an important document of a major voice on the cello and it's fun just to listen to him get around on the thing. An all around first rate listening experience and musical event.

Joe Conroy

This CD (STEL 1005) is available from:

Stellar Sound
834 e. Minor St.
Appleton, WI 54911
or email TurnMatt@aol.com

From Shelter

Steve Peters

Peters- piano

Marghreta Cordero- voices

Alicia Ultan- violas

Another Cold Blue single here. This one has two compositions by Peters on it. “Three Short Stories” is a sort of 20th century update of a baroque solo string essay. Ultan’s viola playing is assured throughout and the piece has an enjoyable stateliness to it. On “My Burning Skin to Sleep” Peters multitracks piano and vocals for a mystery-laden lullaby. It’s restive like the first track and it seems to know you’ve been through tragedies and offers a fine place to convalesce. I can’t say it’s healing music without risking cliché, but just ignore that old cliché and take my word for it: it’s very therapeutic and not bland in any way. It has a lot to offer the body and the mind in it.

Cold Blue

CB 0018

www.coldbluemusic.com

Richard Grooms

Recoding

Unamunos Quorum

Edgar Loutit, Mark Lewis, Lily Bancovich, Sjaak de Jong, Julie Drysdale. (voice, etc.)

with: Harry Williamson (synthesizer), Robert Calvert (saxophone), Rob George (percussion)

Now here's something I don't hear everyday. A group of vocal improvisors,

accompanied on a few pieces by instrumentalists who blend in seamlessly.

They sound wordlessly in a myriad of ways, sometimes constructing invented

languages that somehow always remind me of Europe. Many pieces (I hesitate

to call them songs), are rhythm-based, with a single person declaiming or

wailing or sighing on top. (Is that the Robert Calvert from Hawkwind? Where

has he been?). Tacked on to the end of the CD are various out-takes/false

starts/goof-ups that, to my ear, sound almost rehearsed. Judging by the liner notes, a lot more goes on in one of their performances than meets the ear. The photos look very theatrical or "performance art", and there are quotes from Hugo Ball, Artaud, Kazuo Ono, and a mention of John Stevens as an influence. Quite a blend.

-jeph jerman

Footloose Productions
Collective Effort Press
GPO Box 2430V
Melbourne 3001, Victoria
Australia
edgar@axis.jeack.com.au

Impropera

Non Credo

Joseph Berardi- sampling, keyboards, samples

Kira Vollman- voice, bass clarinet, prolo tape, glockenspiel, hand perc., lyrics

This duo makes you believe that art rock could actually come up with something interesting. It's what Tom Waits might do if he went wholly avant garde and it might get you to believe that Brecht/Weill still live. Not bad for just one record. L.A.-based, Non Credo try to embrace it all and make B-movie sense of everything. Or nonsense, I should say. Refreshing, unpretentious and self-mocking, it's not one to miss by any stretch. Vollman is a phenomenal vocalist-I think I'd rather listen to her than Diamanda Galas, who covers much the same waterfront. Berardi is equally impressive in his sphere. It's best to not concern yourself as to whether this is pop, art rock, improv or what, just jump right in and play (in every sense).

Gazul

GA 8683 AR

www.musearecords.com

Richard Grooms

below beyond above

Voice Crack

Andy Guhl (cracked everyday electronics),
Norbert Moeslang (cracked everyday electronics)

Swiss duo who play mostly invented devices constructed from cheap (?) electronic devices; toys, old circuits, radios...creating a severe yet oddly serene environment of crackles, beeps, loops of bumpy rhythms...this CD is pretty quiet compared to past works. These two often get lumped into the Noise camp, and to be fair, they've often collaborated with American wall-of-sound masters Borbetomagus, to make sprawling UR-symphonies, but here, things are almost pastoral. If this is a general trend for Voice Crack, I like it.

Separating it further from the 'noise as entertainment' aesthetic, this music is not just mashed together willy-nilly, but definitely sounds crafted, carved from piles of old parts. Moeslang-Guhl have discovered other uses for cast-off devices, and to prove the worth of said uses, they carefully add detail on detail to make their own sonic environments. I can't think of anything to compare this soundmaking to, though it may have correlates within the computer/electronic minimalist school that's become so popular in recent years. It just doesn't cost as much. Or sound as sterile.

There's an odd warmth here that causes me to re-listen, and I believe I'd do so even if I were not a big Voice Crack fan.

-jeph jerman

Uhang Production
Steigerstr. 8
CH-9000 St. Gallen
Switzerland

NPFAI/Palmos/NPFAI3/Praxis

Dmitri Voudouris

Voudouris- composer, electronics

he half-hour "Palmos" is long enough to convey a vast, mysterious landscape which includes terrain both strange and gentle. Little happens, perhaps because little needs to happen. This isn't music which feels it needs to make a statement, but it doesn't fade into the wallpaper either. More directly involving are the two NPFAI (New Possibilities for African Instruments) pieces where Voudouris, a long-time South African resident, processes the sounds of the marimba, kundi and mbira through a computer, giving them a delicate, rapid-fire dexterity no human could begin to approach. Think of them as hyper-

David Behrman outings. There are many reasons to involve yourself with this composer's music. It's not only new, but ripe.

Pogus productions

P 21043-2

www.pogus.com

Richard Grooms

WABI Down Home Blues Project Band

“The Best Things In Life Are Still Made By Hand”

Seiji “Wabi” Yuguchi - Vocal & Harmonica

Hiroshi Egushi - Double Bass

Yoshiyuki Mizuno - Guitar

Steve Cushing - Drums

Minnoru Maruyama - Guitar

Tadao Hosonuma - Guitar

Recorded on 3.5.00, 3.12.00 and 11.26.00, this release offers some good ole swamp boogie blues by a mostly Asian band. As good as anything you might hear in the Delta, these guys know how to get down and you will find yourself dancing around, or at the least tapping your foot. Most of the songs are upbeat for your boogie-ing pleasure, but a few are slowed down to lend more of a swamp feel to the CD. The harmonica takes the lead in many songs, but at times the guitar takes over. Wabi also lends great vocal delivery to top it all off. Every song is good and that makes for an good CD for all. Need to hear more from this band - Wail On! - Robin Taylor

Asian Improv Records

814 Mission St. Suite 602

San Francisco, CA 94103

Phone: 877.243.3774

www.asianimprov.com

info@asianimprov.com

Accidents With Nature

Harris Newman- gtr., lapsteel

Bruce Cawdron- perc., glockenspiel

For most of my life I've been enamored of the nuevo folk Takoma label that came out of the 60s. Newman takes that sound (especially the John Fahey element) with its blending of American folk and Middle Eastern harmonics and reshapes it. The instruments used are acoustic, but Newman and Cawdron sometimes make them sound electronic, apparently with tape manipulation. It's all pretty Fahey-esque until "It's a Trap" introduces more idiosyncratic sound suggesting plaintive, prairie-like psychic landscapes. From here on, this is the shape of the album. Newman is with this cd still somewhat under Fahey's shadow, but a good two-thirds of the material here show him claiming a plot of land as his own- a darker, moodier, lonelier place than the Takoma boys have. It's worth your time.

Strange Attractors

SA H029

P.O. Box 13007

Portland, Oregon 97213-0007

www.strange.attractors.com

Richard Grooms

Blue Rhizome

New Quartet

Karl Seigfried- bass, gtr.

Greg Ward- saxophones, flute

Carmel Raz- violin

Chris Avgerin- drums, perc.

A varied document this, encompassing Celtic-tinged jazz, jazz rock, hard rock and a couple of pastoral pieces where Raz shines. All the group members are very strong. Recommended to jazz fans bored by conventional jazz categories.

Imaginary Chicago Records

IGR 003

www.imaginarychicago.com

Richard Grooms

2009

Fingering An Idea

David Watson

Watson- bagpipes, guitars

I first heard of Watson a couple years ago in the London Sunday Times which reviewed one of his records, calling it the “experimental bagpipe record of the year.” Like there was any competition? That one wasn’t released stateside, so when I came upon this one in the hopper I was primed. The whole of the first cd in this 2-cd set is extended bagpipe sonics. Half the cuts are by Watson alone (or multitracked) and half are bagpipe group efforts with five other pipers joining along. What comes across throughout this cd is the eternal sustained tone or drone, the long view, the pleasing howl from which you could imagine all bagpipe music of all cultures ultimately comes. There are some recognizably Scottish swirls here and there, and these are evocative, and sometimes thrilling. They always return, however, to the ageless drone ocean that is the fundamental characteristic of this record. This cd is recommended to partisans of Phill Niblock and 60s-era La Monte Young. It is restorative, calming, exalted, scary, soothing, focussing.

The second cd is multi-tracked guitars, all played by Watson. These are minimal pieces for mostly electric guitars, but sometimes acoustic ones, and feature frequently recurring patterns in the classic early minimalist mode. I frankly wish there was more variation here. Where the bagpipe cd was spiritually nourishing, this one is more like roughage without water, milk or butter to help it go down easily. Nevertheless, the first cd is so stunning it nullifies the issue of the hanger-on second one. The twofer list price means you can’t go wrong here.

XI Records

XI 132

www.xirecords.org

Richard Grooms

Vex Ohm /AVTR009

Christof Migone, Michel Cote, Louis Ouellet

Gregory Whitehead (Instrumentation not listed)

Improv pieces in honor of boho pantheon members Gilles Deleuze and Artaud. Also Satie, who's not in that group (maybe because he didn't advocate cruelty). I had to use the search button to see where these were going at times. Fast forward didn't offer much illumination, though. The one above it -skip- may come in handy for some listeners. Rowdy puttering around the studio is what's generally on offer here. This would be pretty okay accompanying a documentary about the first two men. And it evokes the randomness of radio stations half heard late at night, but it's not nearly as good as Cage doing that. It's mostly something that accompanies a thing, not the thing itself.

Richard Grooms

Zeppelins Erste Grosse Fahrt

Todd Whitman- bari. sax, reeds, amplified metal, etc.

It's getting truly harder to be out there in these days when the New York Times reviews the new Animal Collective CD, and reviews it favorably at that. So this group of live shots at the High Zero Festival in Baltimore a couple of years ago really makes it because it'd still be outrageous now. And well outside the mainstream I'm pleased to say. Here Whitman jams with six groups in the spirit of the title of the record, i.e. very noisily, irreverently and physically and uncontrollably. "Rompin and Stompin" is plain garglerific and a kick; the liner notes promise Whitman is a figure from the id and I'm inclined to agree; and throughout all the players blow it out of their systems (so to speak) in nicely assertive ways. This is material not likely to be accepted by the Times anytime soon. It's so idful you might want to break it up into smaller chunks. Festival goers had breaks between these sets, too, you know.

Recorded 016

www.recorded.org

Richard Grooms

Trad Corrosion

Gebhard Ullman (bass clarinet, soprano and tenor saxes, wood flute),
Phil Haynes (drums),
Andreas Willers (electric and classical guitars, electric sitar, prepared guitar).

Three names unknown to me until now, and I must confess I was prepared to not like this disc, based on certain personal prejudices about CD artwork. In future I think I'll just listen and not look right away, as I was pleasantly surprised. 19 mostly short (under 4 minutes) pieces that go in many directions. As all of the titles have only one writing credit, I'm assuming that these are loose compositions in which a lot of improvising takes place. Right now my favourite is 'Princess'. Written by stringster Willers, it starts with a drony sitar figure that stops and starts, accompanied by soft brushes on the drums and a single note ³beat² from the bass clarinet, that becomes a simple melody and then opens into a tricky fast little riff, before halting and slowing back down. In the middle we get buzzy noises and then a quiet solo from the sitar, and than a return to the theme.

On the whole, the music here presented is on the quieter side, especially for a drums/reeds/guitar trio. It sometimes skirts the edges of jazz, reminding me for short periods of John Abercrombie. The instruments take turns being the dominant voice, and change of direction is fairly frequent, bith traits I admire.

Now, about that cover art...

-jeph jerman

Nabel
Rochusstr. 61
D-52062 Aachen
Germany
Ph: (0) 241-2 57 35
Fax: (0) 241-3 14 12

Trad Corrosion

Gebhard Ullman (bass clarinet, soprano and tenor saxes, wood flute),
Phil Haynes (drums),
Andreas Willers (electric and classical guitars, electric sitar, prepared guitar).

Three names unknown to me until now, and I must confess I was prepared to not like this disc, based on certain personal prejudices about CD artwork. In future I think I'll just listen and not look right away, as I was pleasantly surprised. 19 mostly short (under 4 minutes) pieces that go in many directions. As all of the titles have only one writing credit, I'm assuming that these are loose compositions in which a lot of improvising takes place. Right now my favourite is 'Princess'. Written by stringster Willers, it starts with a drony sitar figure that stops and starts, accompanied by soft brushes on the drums and a single note ³beat² from the bass clarinet, that becomes a simple melody and then opens into a tricky fast little riff, before halting and slowing back down. In the

middle we get buzzy noises and then a quiet solo from the sitar, and then a return to the theme.

On the whole, the music here presented is on the quieter side, especially for a drums/reeds/guitar trio. It sometimes skirts the edges of jazz, reminding me for short periods of John Abercrombie. The instruments take turns being the dominant voice, and change of direction is fairly frequent, both traits I admire.

Now, about that cover art...

-jeph jerman

Nabel
Rochusstr. 61
D-52062 Aachen
Germany
Ph: (0) 241-2 57 35
Fax: (0) 241-3 14 12

DEMO (cd) **Ernesto Diaz-Infante and Rotcod Zzaj**

Sdrawkcab Zzaj (cd) **Davey Williams & Rotcod Zzaj**

two reviews...

Having received two of Dr. Zzaj's new home-made Cd's, the first representing his current collaborations with Ernesto Diaz-Infante, I readied myself, and here's what happened...

On DEMO, The first cut "*We are Real*" opens dramatically like a full orchestra espionage movie score, complete with string flourishes and tympani: all the hallmarks of a suspense drama unfolds as the question, "Is there really life?" and the suggestion "get a taste" are repeated in a jazz chantwith the admonition to "get a taste for what is really real"... upbeat and catchy! It kind of puts you in the hot seat.

The relentless full range synthesized orchestration sounds great while driving..*great* road music! So catchy, I find myself replaying it in my head, if not singing along! (Michael Jackson in Nevada would love it! - See his article in **Articles - the improviser**) The text gets darker as it unfolds. As questions are asked, that require a deeper response and inner quest as the music seems to go through transition into a cosmic space warp. The piece again comes to recapitulation with the question, "Is there Really Life?" But then...unfortunately..

the first cut proceeded to break up, skip, and stutter...as did the rest.

I wasn't sure if ANYTHING was REAL after that,so I proceeded to the next CD. (But if you want to hear a mp3 example of Zzaj and Ernesto, try...
http://www.iuma.com/IUMA/Bands/Rotcod_Zzaj/songs.html
or at <http://www.riffage.com/Bands/0,2939,6365,00.html> you'll find zoolB s'yevED & several other cuts from various & sundry albums/CD's).

Sdrawkcab Zzaj - Davey Williams & Rotcod Zzaj & friends...

Without really looking at the cover, I stuck it in the machine. It immediately presented music more in keeping with my image of what Zzaj plays; but with familiar sounding bluesy, jazzy meanderings, obviously freely indulgent of the moment. A positive revelry of "good time"/ "good moment" playing...

Then there were these eery, murky meanderings that I'm sure my mother would NOT call "music". .. piano bell tones, and vocalizations, some drumming, took a while to unfold before setting the tone for the dreamy poetic offerings and political grumblings. A long Zzaj jam obviously edited off to silence only to produce a demented "country-western" reprise improv on piano and guitar ...waky and wavy, again sounding *oddly* familiar.

You can imagine my surprise when I opened the sleeve to realize this recording was made at MY HOUSE, 15 YEARS AGO! It was then that I recognized my own, slightly "out of tune" piano. Oh, boy.

The following cut sounded like it was recorded in a cavern, and indeed it was! At that time, our main venue for the "Improv Series" was a dark and dingy new wave bar called the CAVERN! Well, this was a Cavern gig! Mucho high voltage trips between drums and guitar, Zzaj's Rhodes piano and the alto saxophone of Wally Shoup, betray the unabashed freedom of time and indeterminate "jazzing" up with abstractions, noise, fugitive running on and on...

Next cut...back at the house. Ah, the memory of cappucino! with some of the queezy, sneering underwater melodics that only Davey Williams can produce, and Metcalf "flailing away" on my out of tune Mason and Hamlin piano.

It was really hard for me to listen "objectively" as the CD brought back so many verdent memories of a kind of golden age of development. Trial and error, passion in the midst of obscurity, eccentricity and rejection by the Southern society (a sign of virtue), a time of calling with no guarantee of outcome. And poverty, a normal exchange for living a life of rampant creativity. Truly, it was the age of music exploration as both serious art and social recreation. We were an artistic statement that slapped the face of New Wave. Even the kids ignored us! But, we MADE them listen! With beat poet mutterings accompanied by soft jazz progression, trapset punctuations before the groove set in. Laid back.... a touch of "Rhodes" flavor, garnished by Williams. This jam must've been endless, because Zzaj cut it off. [ie. edit..fade out.]

Cut 4 **eigoow eigoob** [fades in] At the Cavern, an upbeat breaky dancegroove led by Williams. Faintly, you can hear my own weak and amateurish fake cornet interactions creating the REAL "Holiday Inn" atmosphere of soft-bad-jazz-gone insane. Cut 5 **oot edulretni onaip** Back in the home studio, duet, pretty much consists of Williams soloing madly over Zzaj's accenting and pounding high energy, yet straight forward piano comps. Again, if I'd known this music would end up on a

CD, I would've had the piano tuned, and served Champaign!

-

Cut 6 **hasd oduesp** At the Cavern, a quartet featuring drummer John Thompson and Wally Shoup's raw alto sax sound. I believe it was his old horn, the old nickel plated alto that got stolen in the park. Took me back, reminising the old Wally Shoup sound. Anyway, the improv broke away into some high level simultaneous not jollyng. It's a wild furray of dense sound. Cut 7 **eerht onaip** Back in the studio....i get the drift. The alternating of some of the private playing that led up to the "event" we staged at the Cavern. This, so far, one of my favorite cuts. Lots of attitude! Zzaj splashing around...Williams horsing out too many notes, too fast for his own good, and carrying the listener with them. Well, that IS what it's all about...keeping us ENGAGED! And so, it is....

Cut 8 **sdrawkcab zzaj** So it was, so it is... so it will be.

-LaDonna Smith

-

GLOSSARY of Zzaj TITLES

(backwards translation, courtesy of Davey Williams):

To begin with, the title of the CD,
Sdrawkcab Zzaj = 'jazz backwards'

Other titles as follows:

- 1. desu appaz taht sedahs = shades that zappa used**
- 2. edulretni onaip = piano interlude**
- 3. cibeoma = amoebic**
- 4. eigoow eigoob = boogie woogie**
- 5. oot edulretni onaip = piano interlude too**
- 6. hasd oduesp = pseudo dash**
- 7. eerht onaip = piano three**
- 8. sdrawkcab zzaj = jazz backwards**
- 9. sngriv 000.01 = 10,000 virgins**
- 10. zoolb s'yevad = davey's blooz**

Buy at:

<http://www.olywa.net/rotcod/cds.htm>

catalog # ZP-32

Collection Plate

William Carlos Williams

Some HEAVY, heavy jazz that cuts to the absolute CORE in only seconds on this CD release by Shoestring Records. This is th' kind of "outer limits" jazz that only th' totally frayed will find an intimate attraction to. Starts off with a rollicking rampage set piece that I fell in love with from the first bar. Sorta' "Sharrock-like", but with far more interaction between the horns & guitars than on some of those efforts. Williams & crew take you through all the paces, from rock/punk/jazz to phaser ballads that build in momentum to the point of heart attack! The interaction between the guitars and horns is punctuated SUPERBLY by the percussion/drums; in sections it can remind one of some of the Mahavishnu stuff of days gone by (imagine Billy Cobham on some kind o' '90's "crank steroids". It's simply beautiful to hear this kind of high energy music performed in an improvisatory mode. This is the way most of us would love to play! TOTAL communication between these players is totally evident, & will fill those with improv in their blood with pure joy!!! Listeners who must have anchor points will (prob'ly) not be able to keep up with this, but those who are more intense in their listening habits will come away feeling enriched and energized! My biggest criticism is that an album with this much power deserves a little more work on the presentation... graphics on th' insert & credits were hard to read and somewhat foggy! It still gets a HIGHLY RECOMMENDED from this reviewer!

Rotcod Zzaj

Shoestring Records,
POB 8952, Atlanta, GA 31105-0952,
via e-mail to ShoeRec@aol.com <http://members.tripod.com/~shoestringrecords>

tibooburra

Stevie Wishart (violin), Jim Denley (wind instruments).

The cover of this CD is adorned with manipulated photographs of land, presumably somewhere in Australia, where a lot of the source material for the music comes from. The music itself is also made at least partly by manipulating and adding to recordings of natural environments. But whereas the visuals suggest the altering of nature by an artist, the sonics seem to point toward a joining together of everyday sounds and more intent-laden 'music'. For example, the longest track on the CD 'west of west', starts off with insect buzzings, quickly joined by six-year-old-with-a-straw sounds, then it gives way to almost recognizable flutings. Frogs, traffic, and we're into a bit of some travelogue music, which uses the frog voices as part of the structure. Solo frogs, stones, intercuts by some alien-sounding (in this context) electronics, and then bird song, which gives way to crowd sounds and we're suddenly in the middle of some human gathering, an MC and some children chattering away. "Now that's the way you spend Sunday arvo..."

Under this the birds come back as a loop, and then some bass flutterings and string pizzicato, (though it's almost unrecognizable), over which a bamboo flute improvises. A ham radio conversation leads into static approaching and receding, more voices, and a loop of a barely tuned in radio station (thunder), stones return...these sounds are all treated in various ways and re-appear throughout the piece in increasingly altered form. My favourite bit of the piece is a buzzy loop joined by a static-laden radiobeat, (plus voices) which becomes the basis for a very appalachian sounding fiddlesong.

And it all sounds perfectly natural., flowing like a daylong journey cross-country, the travellers joining in with the sounds around them as they move. An idea that is very near to my heart.

As music, it kept me glued to my stereo, wondering what would come next, and I hope to hear more from these cogs in the Machine For Making Sense.

jeph jerman

Split Records
PO Box 445
Potts Pt.
1335 NSW Australia
ph/fax 61 2 93577723
splitrec@ozemail.com.au
www.nmn.org.au/machine

GATHERING OF ANCESTORS

CD

Francis Wong

Francis Wong: Tenor sax, flute

Elliot Humberto Kavee: Drums

John-Carlos Perea: Fretless bass, American Indian cedar flute, vocals

Francis Wong's sax is the feature on this CD from Asian Improv Records (label caught my eye right away, because I've reviewed several outstanding works by Jeff Song & Matt Turner - as well as others - on this label). It's an interesting experience, for sure... cultural influences abound, & from the standpoint of great improvised music, I think this kind of blending will have a lot to do with shaping the great (new) musics to come in the 21st century. Definitely improvised (though with the framework of traditional Chinese, American Indian and Jewish pieces to diverge from), especially on the pieces that highlight Wong's saxophone (and flute) playing. I'm not sure if it was the strident beats of Kavee's drums, or the tendency to stick a little too closely to those ancient improv "patterns", but while interesting, it didn't have the "flavor of abandon" I had expected. Still, the blending of cultures reflected through this trio's playing styles has (both) high energy and a clear talent that will be attractive to many. Gets a RECOMMENDED from me. Rotcod Zzaj

Asian Improv Records
123 Townsend, Suite 315
San Francisco, CA 94107
USA

Variety Orchestra

Brian Woodbury

Using Woodbury's compositions, some hipstah nerdy, ultra-eclectic, Bill Frissel-like white folks get together, detonate jazz big band conventions, pick up the pieces, and reassemble them in striking new ways.

"Take the J Train" demonstrates thrilling chops from all but is never show-offy. "Garbanzo Beans" is a suedo-Hispanic rollercoaster joyride. Throughout, this small big band takes Either/Orchestra and Jeff Kaiser big band innovations and inject them into somewhat more mainstream territory and thereby enliven it. It all works well for these poindexterish pomos.

A joy it is. Salut.

ReR BWI/Some Phil – 7

www.rerusa.com

Richard Grooms

Sirius Intrigues

The Moment As The Motive

Ernesto Diaz-Infante,
Rotcod Zzaj (various instruments)

A couple of CDRs from these great-norwesters. I hear guitars, keyboards, effects...very in your face for the most part, but somebody's got that ol' Frith guitar sound, so I keep listening. Fragments of speaking voices waft by, strangled strings become computer glitches...rising and falling crunchies...Someone singing with the radio turns into soundtracky keyboards with guitar and telephone dialing...wait, did I hear a drum machine? Oh, it's all flying by too fast to write down.

I heard Diaz-Infante perform live a year or so back, and these discs have much more mass and ideas-per-minute than the set I witnessed. Not a judgement, just an observation.

Sounds oddly like the world, filtered through ten fingers and electricity.

jeph jerman

<http://www.olywa.net/rotcod/CDS.htm>
